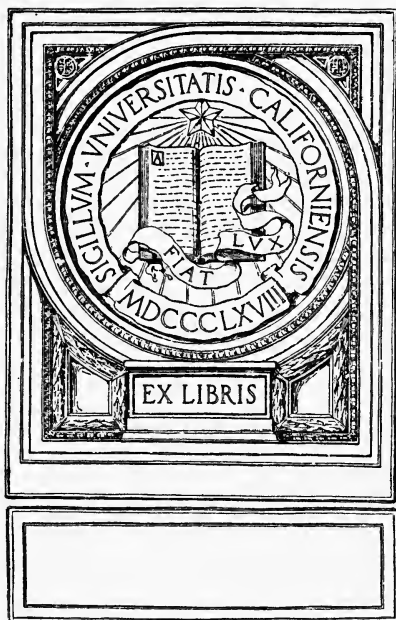
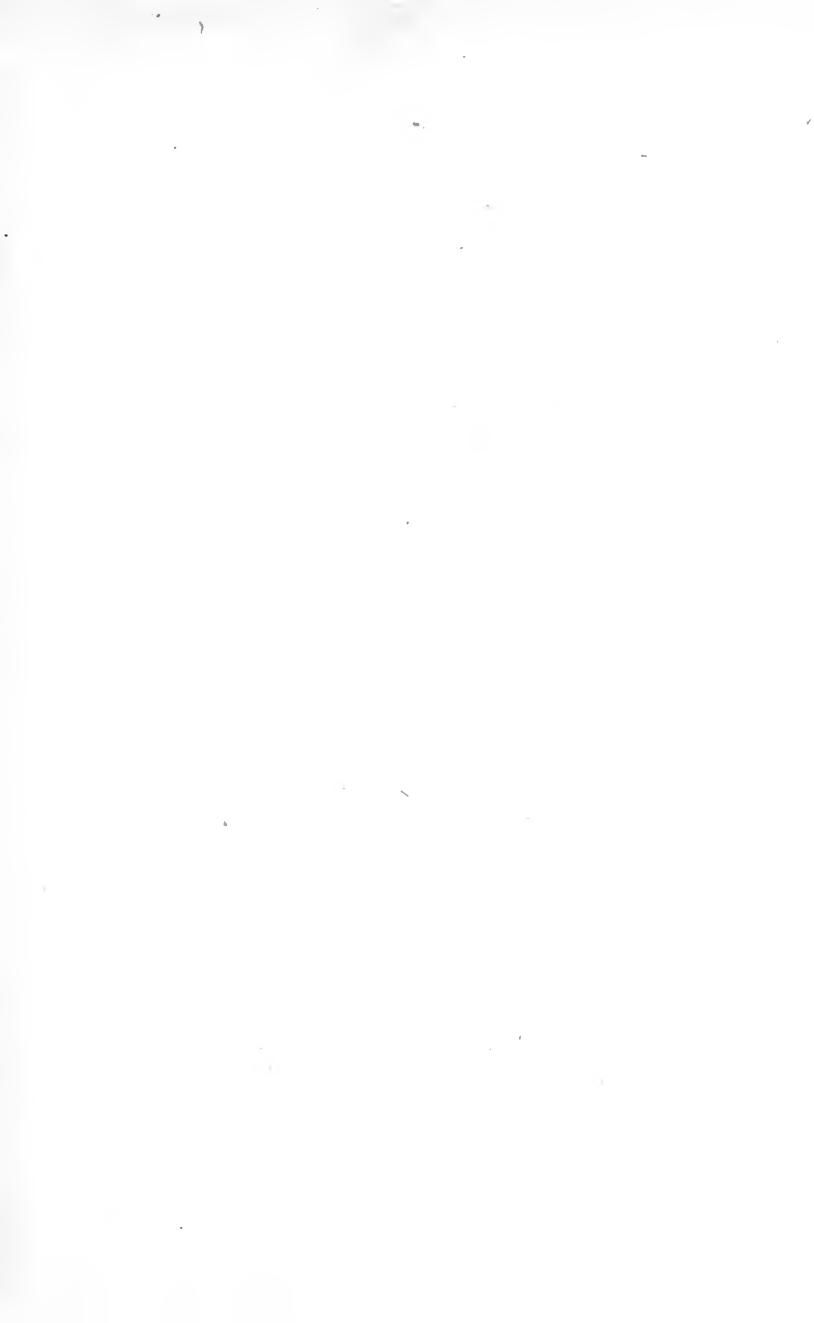


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COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS







COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS, *about 1815*  
From a portrait by John W. Jarvis, at the United States Naval Academy,  
Annapolis, Maryland

# COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS

CAPTAIN, COMMODORE, AND SENIOR OFFICER  
OF THE AMERICAN NAVY

1773-1838

## A BIOGRAPHY

BY

CHARLES OSCAR PAULLIN



CLEVELAND, OHIO  
THE ARTHUR H. CLARK COMPANY  
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## PREFACE

COMMODORE John Rodgers was born on the eve of the American Revolution, and died a few years before the Mexican War, having served almost two decades as the senior officer of the navy. Arriving at early manhood during that critical period when the government under the Constitution was initiated, tested, and developed, he was called to play an exceedingly important part on the stage of national affairs, both as a naval officer and an administrative official. His achievements in war, diplomacy, and administration were greater than those of any of his naval colleagues, and his life compares most favorably with theirs in wealth and picturesqueness of incident. He was part and parcel of the Old Navy – the navy of sailing ships, self-trained officers, and bluff hardy seamen. Entering that service in its formative period, he did much to fix its customs, standards, and traditions. He became its typical commander, the incarnation of its spirit, and the exemplar for its young men.

In writing this book, personal events have been abstracted from their setting rather less than is usual in naval biographies. An attempt has been made to explain and illustrate the life of Rodgers by means of his environment. As a result of this plan, a fuller, and doubtless a truer, biography has been produced, and a considerable account of the Old Navy has been presented, to which service Rodgers devoted the forty best years of his life. While the information contained in this biography is primarily concerned with Rodgers

and the navy, much of it has a wider bearing and is related to the more general history of America. Mention may be made of the facts now first brought to light in those chapters treating of the wars with Barbary and Great Britain, and of the period, 1806-1811, marked by the Chesapeake-Leopard and President-Little Belt affairs.

The chief sources of information are listed in the Bibliography, at the end of the volume. In making quotations, the punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, misspellings, and paragraphing of the originals have not always been followed when departures therefrom rendered the sense clearer. Since the manuscripts of the United States Navy Department are arranged chronologically, the quotations from them may be readily verified. The source of information is often indicated by the context, when it is not by a footnote.

I am under many obligations to Rear-admiral Frederick Rodgers, U.S.N., (retired), and to Mrs. J. N. Maccomb, both of Washington, D.C., for documents, suggestions, and criticisms. I am indebted also to Mr. Robert S. Rodgers of Kansas City for valuable information. The Honorable Victor H. Metcalf, secretary of the navy, Rear-admiral John E. Pillsbury, U.S.N., chief of the bureau of navigation, and Rear-admiral Washington L. Capps, U.S.N., chief of the bureau of construction and repair, gave me access to the documents of their offices. Mr. Charles W. Stewart, superintendent of the library and naval war records office, permitted me to use the numerous materials of which he is custodian and in many other ways assisted me in prosecuting my researches. I wish also to make my acknowledgments to the officials of the Library of Con-

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gress, the Maryland Historical Society, the Johns Hopkins University, the Peabody Institute, The Harford County (Maryland) Historical Society, the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the United States Department of War, and the United States Naval Institute.

Washington, May, 1909. CHARLES OSCAR PAULLIN.





## I. FAMILY AND EARLY LIFE: 1773-1797

THE history of our navy may be divided into four periods: (1) the Continental Navy, 1775-1785; (2) the Old Navy, 1794-1855; (3) the First Steam Navy, 1855-1880; and (4) the New Navy, 1880-1909. The first period, 1775-1785, is almost coincident with the Revolutionary War, in which conflict Captains John Paul Jones, John Barry, Esek Hopkins, Abraham Whipple, Samuel Tucker, and Silas Talbot achieved distinction. In the second period, 1794-1855, our wars with France (1798-1801), the Barbary states (1801-1806, and 1815), Great Britain (1812-1815), and Mexico (1846-1848) were fought; and the old wooden sailingships were at their best. The years from 1798 to 1815 have been called the heroic age of the American navy; for then its heroes were the most numerous, its deeds the most daring, and its operations the most picturesque. These were the years when our vessels were commanded by Preble, Hull, Decatur, Lawrence, Macdonough, Bainbridge, David Porter, O. H. Perry, and the elder John Rodgers, the subject of this biography. Shortly before the Civil War, steam-engines began to supersede sails as a means of propulsion, and the period of the First Steam Navy, 1855-1880, was ushered in. The naval celebrities of this era won their laurels in the Civil War, and many of their names are still well remembered - Farragut, D. D. Porter, Dupont, Dahlgren, Foote, the elder C. H. Davis, and the younger John Rodgers. The last period of our naval history, 1880-1909, has been marked by the construction of a

powerful fleet of ironclads, torpedo boats, and submarines, and by the victories of Manila Bay and Santiago which recently brought Dewey and Sampson into prominence.

The term of naval service of Commodore John Rodgers, 1798-1838, lies wholly within the period of the Old Navy. He was one of the heroes of the navy's heroic age, having played a conspicuous part in three naval wars. For seventeen years he was the senior officer of the navy; and for more than nineteen years he held one of the principal administrative offices at Washington, the presidency of the board of naval commissioners. Twice he was offered the secretaryship of the navy, and for a time he served as the secretary of the navy *ad interim*. He was long a familiar figure in Washington, where he resided during the latter part of his life, and where he became acquainted with many of the most distinguished statesmen of the first half of the nineteenth century. Not a few of his descendants have achieved distinction as officers of the navy and of the army, on the rolls of which service the names of several of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren are still to be found.

Commodore John Rodgers sprang from one of the American branches of the "family of Roger," whose numerous members are now well scattered over western Europe and the United States. The name, Roger, has many variants and derivatives, of which Rogers and Rodgers occur the most frequently. It has been common on the Continent for a thousand years. One of its early forms, Rudiger, is found in the Nibelungenlied. The name is said to be derived from two words meaning red spear. According to one authority the earliest crest of the Roger escutcheon was a fleur de lis, and the first

family motto was *nos nostraque Deo*—ourselves and our possessions for God.

No fewer than twenty-seven of the companions of William the Conqueror who crossed the Channel with him in 1066 bore the name of "Roger." The descendants of these men and of other immigrants of the family were soon scattered over England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. In England the family has had members in every walk of life, high and low, in church and state, among the nobility and the common people, on land and at sea. In 1480, Thomas Rogers was keeper and governor of the King's ships. In 1709, Captain Woodes Rogers rescued Alexander Selkirk from the island Juan Fernandez; and during our Revolution Captain Josias Rogers of the Royal Navy commanded the "General Monk" when she was captured by the American ship, "Hyder Ally," Lieutenant Joshua Barney.

In Scotland the name is usually spelled with a "d"—Rodgers—although other spellings are not uncommon. One of the earliest representatives of the family in that country was Roger, bishop of St. Andrews, who in 1200 founded the episcopal castle of St. Andrews. In the rock on which this stronghold was built, a deep dungeon was dug, of the shape of a frustrum of a cone, and with a diameter at the top of seven feet. Here were confined many offenders against both the church and the state. It is of record that in 1544 Friar John Rogers was imprisoned in this dungeon for heresy and was later secretly assassinated. A more recent Scottish representative of the family is Alexander Rodgers, a poet of distinction. He may have been a near relative of Commodore John Rodgers, who had a brother of the same name.

Many members of the Rodger clan emigrated from the British Isles to America, where at the outbreak of

the Revolution they were fairly numerous. Not a few of them followed the sea for a livelihood. In Maryland both the English and Scottish branches were represented. To the Scottish branch belonged Colonel John Rodgers, the father of Commodore John Rodgers, and the founder of the Rodgers family of Havre de Grace, Maryland. He was born in Scotland about 1726. When a young man he emigrated to the Middle States, and about 1760 he married Elizabeth Reynolds, the daughter of Thomas and Margaret Reynolds of Delaware. This family was a prominent one in that state, and like the family of Rodgers was of Scotch descent. Thomas Reynolds was a Presbyterian minister. His daughter Elizabeth, the mother of Commodore Rodgers, was born in 1742 or 1743, and is said to have been a woman of great energy and strength of character.

Probably soon after his marriage Colonel John Rodgers moved to Maryland. A few years before the Revolution he was living on a farm in Baltimore County of that state, two miles from Lower Susquehanna Ferry. This little village was situated on the west bank of the Susquehanna, near its mouth, and on the Philadelphia-Baltimore post-road, for many years the chief thoroughfare between the North and the South. About 1774, Rodgers moved to the village and opened a tavern. At the outbreak of the Revolution in 1775 he warmly espoused the cause of the patriots. Soon after the battle of Bunker Hill, in accordance with the resolutions of the Provincial Convention of Maryland, he raised a company of militia for the defense of his state and took command of it as captain. In September, 1775, he reported his company as "young and enrolling daily," and he was then writing to the Harford County Committee for arms, which he and his officers agreed to re-

turn when "this unhappy contest shall subside." Rodgers and his men may have joined the Continental army under Washington, although we have found no evidence that they did so. In 1778, he received from the governor and council of Maryland a commission of captain of militia. Whether he was promoted to a higher rank is not known. In the latter part of his life he was always called Colonel John Rodgers. It is said that on several occasions during the war he gave proofs of gallantry and patriotism.

In 1774, Harford County, in which was situated Lower Susquehanna Ferry, was separated from Baltimore County and received a government of its own. Both in 1775 and 1776, Colonel Rodgers was appointed by the Harford County Committee to carry around among his neighbors for signatures the "Association of the Freemen of Maryland." The association bound those who signed it to support the patriot cause. The names of those who refused to sign it and the reasons for their refusal were reported by Rodgers and his fellow solicitors to the county committee. The reasons given by the non-associators for not joining the patriots were various. One man had religious scruples, another feared "it would fetch him into a scrape," and a third would not sign "by reason it is a mystery to him." Isaac Penrose declared that he did not choose to fight for liberty and never would; and Benjamin Fleetwood said that he would go in a vessel but he would not fight by land.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Rodgers seems to have prospered during the Revolution. In 1776, he formed a partnership with a friend, and they purchased a sawmill, mill-dam and mill-race, and built a grist-mill; and in 1777, he bought

<sup>1</sup> Preston, W. W. *History of Harford County, Maryland*, 110-111, 263-264, 312, 322.

a farm of one hundred sixty-five acres on Broad Creek in Harford County. About 1780, he moved across the Susquehanna River into Cecil County, opposite to Lower Susquehanna Ferry or Havre de Grace, as the village was renamed. Here for several years he kept the old stone tavern, still standing in 1897, and operated a ferry that plied between the east side of the river and Havre de Grace. His hostelry was a stopping-point on the old Philadelphia-Baltimore post-road, and was frequented by Washington, Madison, and many other southern statesmen traveling to and from the seat of government at Philadelphia or New York. It was the scene of many gay parties in which his attractive sons and daughters participated.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless in this old stone house his daughter Maria Ann was married to William Pinkney, Maryland's famous orator and jurist.

Colonel and Mrs. Rodgers had eight children, four sons, Alexander, Thomas Reynolds, John, and George Washington; and four daughters, Maria Ann, Mary, Elizabeth, and Rebecca. Thomas was a doctor and a student at Princeton. George Washington, the youngest child, was a commodore of the navy, and married a sister of Commodores O. H. and M. C. Perry. Several of his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons became naval officers. Mary wedded Howes Goldsborough, a member of a distinguished Maryland family of that name. Maria Ann married William Pinkney of Maryland; and Rebecca, Andrew Gray of Delaware. Several of their descendants have been men of national renown. Colonel Rodgers died in 1791. His wife survived him a quarter of a century. They are buried in White Clay Creek Cemetery, New Castle County, Delaware.

<sup>2</sup> Archer, G. W. *Letters to R. S. Rodgers*, Nov. 18, 1894, Oct. 31, 1897.

Commodore John Rodgers was one of the older children of the family. He was born in 1773 on a farm two miles from Lower Susquehanna Ferry. The first thirteen years of his life were spent in or near this village, which was renamed Havre de Grace while John was a boy. There is a tradition that this name was chosen by Lafayette in honor of the famous French port of Havre or Havre de Grace. It was first applied to the site of a proposed city near the village which was laid out about 1780 by Robert Young Stokes, one of the first boomers of town sites in the United States. It seems that he expected that the seat of the national government would be located at the mouth of the Susquehanna, and he made his plans accordingly. He bought a tract of land containing eight hundred and fifty acres, and divided it into forty-five hundred lots. His proposed city, however, never acquired the dignity of brick and mortar. Its situation was pleasing and promising enough. The view of the bay and the surrounding hills was exceedingly beautiful, and the soil of the adjacent countryside was quite fertile. The head of the Chesapeake abounded in shad and herring, and near by on the Susquehanna—a word so sweet-sounding that no less a man than Robert Louis Stevenson liked to roll it on his tongue—were the feeding-grounds of the famous canvasbacks and redheads. But the fates were against Stokes's enterprise.

Young John, who was a remarkably strong and hardy youth, spent many happy hours fishing and fowling on the waters near his home. In winter he would sometimes break the ice and swim after the wild ducks which he shot and killed from the banks of the Susquehanna. He took part in the games of the boys of the village, and was their leader in many a daring adventure. He at-

tended the village school, and acquired the rudiments of an education. He read many books treating of sailors and a seafaring life, which fired his imagination and aroused his curiosity. The vessels that visited Havre de Grace were schooner-rigged, and John greatly desired to see a large square-rigged ship. One day at school he suddenly made up his mind as to what he should do. He decided to go to Baltimore, thirty-five miles distant, and see what the big ships were like and get a job on one of them. Keeping his plans to himself, he one day set out for Baltimore on foot. Missing John and learning the route that he had taken, Colonel Rodgers followed him on horseback and overtook him as he was entering the city. The colonel insisted that the runaway should return home, but he stubbornly refused to do so. Finding that he had set his heart on going to sea, the colonel bound him out for five years as an apprentice to a highly respected shipmaster of Baltimore, Captain Benjamin Folger. The father accompanied the young sailor to his ship and saw that he was well settled on board her. Before bidding him good-by, Colonel Rodgers earnestly requested his son never to touch strong drink. The boy gave his word, and kept it. Throughout his long life Commodore Rodgers abstained from the use of spirituous liquors.<sup>3</sup> This is all the more remarkable since a century ago, rum was as great a staple in the navy as bread, and drinking was regarded as an accomplishment rather than a curse.

Colonel Rodgers's choice of Captain Folger as a master for his son could not have been bettered. This old sea-captain had seen much service during the Revolution on board Baltimore privateers. For a time he was first officer on the topsail schooner, "Antelope," com-

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<sup>3</sup> Rodgers, Commodore John. *Autobiography*, 1-2.



manded by Captain Jeremiah Yellott, later for several years federal navy agent at Baltimore. In 1780, he had a ship of his own, the "Felicity." The next year he went to sea as commander of the "Antelope," and sailed in company with the "Felicity," which was now commanded by Captain Thomas Cole. The two ships visited Guadaloupe, and on their return voyage captured off the Patuxent the notorious privateer, "Jack-o'-the-Lantern." After the Revolution Folger entered the merchant service. When young Rodgers joined him he was captain of the "Maryland," a fine ship of several hundred tons burden, owned by himself and Samuel and John Smith, noted Baltimore merchants of their day. In 1786 and 1787, Folger visited the French ports, L'Orient and Bordeaux. In the fall of the latter year the "Maryland" was sold; and in 1788, her commander, doubtless accompanied by his apprentice, sailed for the West Indies as the master of the schooner, "Pilgrim." In the following year he was still engaged in the trade with these islands, but in 1790 and 1791, he was sailing out of Baltimore for French and Dutch ports as master of the ship, "Harmony."

Folger disappears from view in 1797, when he was appointed by President Washington consul to Aux Cayes, Santo Domingo. He was one of the most skillful and successful of the Baltimore sea-captains of his time, and was admirably qualified to train his young apprentice in the sailor's art. To Folger, Rodgers was in no small degree indebted for his superior seamanship, his high standards of duty, and his complete mastery of his calling. His steady habits, willingness to accept responsibility, and skill as a sailor, soon won for him the favorable opinion of his captain. Before Rodgers was eighteen years old, Folger made him first mate of the

"Harmony"; and a short time after the completion of his apprenticeship, his former master recommended him so highly that he obtained the command of a fine vessel, engaged in the European trade. This good fortune came to him early in 1793, before he was twenty years old.

At this time Baltimore was a city of about fourteen thousand inhabitants. In the value of her trade she was the third or fourth port of the Union. Her principal exports were flour, tobacco, wheat, corn, merchandise, coffee, furs, staves, rice, bread, flaxseed, turpentine, rum, and pork. Her imports consisted largely of merchandise, sugar, coffee, wine, distilled spirits, molasses, and hardware. She had about one hundred coasters, and about one hundred twenty-five vessels engaged in foreign trade. The average burden of these craft was only one hundred fifty tons. The foreign trade was chiefly with the West Indies and Europe, and occasionally with Africa and the Far East. It often took from two to three months to cross the Atlantic. Since considerable time was consumed in selling the cargo carried out and in buying a new one to bring home, not more than a single voyage to Europe was made, as a rule, in a year. The old shipmasters acquired much skill as merchants, as they were frequently called upon to act in that capacity in the ports visited by them.

Rodgers's first command was the ship, "Jane," which was described as a "fine stout vessel, well found." Her burden was given as 360 hogsheads, 2,400 barrels, or 11,000 bushels—that is some 300 tons. According to present standards the "Jane" was a mere cockle-shell, but she was twice as large as the average Baltimore ship of her day. She was owned by the Baltimore merchants, Samuel and John Smith.



## For Freight or Charter,

The fast-sailing Brig POLLY,  
burthen 1200 barrels, lying in the  
basin, and will be ready to take in  
her cargo in 10 days. For terms ap-  
ply to the master on board or to

P. BRANNICK, F. G.

No. 15, Cheapside.

WHO HAS FOR SALE,

A few boxes well assorted IRISH LINENS,  
entitled to the drawback. And, 30 boxes fresh  
Lisbon LEMONS. Sept. 6.



## For Hamburg,

The Ship JANE, capt. Rodgers.  
She is in complete order, and will  
be ready to take in on Wednesday  
next. For terms of freight apply to

L. TIERNAN, or

JOHN HOLMES.

Who have for sale, imported in the above ship,  
2000 bushels fine SALT and a few crates assorted  
EARTHEN WARE.

Oct. 1.

1796



## For Sale or Charter,

The Ship HEBE,  
Burthen about three thousand barrels  
flour, almost new, and sails fast. For



Rodgers was captain of the "Jane" for four or five years, and sailed out of Baltimore for English, French, Spanish, and German ports. He left on his first voyage early in 1793, and returned home in September from Cadiz with a load of salt. About a year later the "Jane" again returned from Europe. A notion of her cargo may be obtained from the following advertisement inserted in the Baltimore *Daily Intelligencer* for October 20, 1794: "JUST IMPORTED—In the Ship 'Jane,' Captain Rodgers, from Bordeaux, and for sale by the subscribers—Brandy, in pipes; choice Claret, in tierces; White Wine, Vinegar, in anchors; Olives, Anchovies and Capers, in cases; Men and Women's white and colored Gloves, in assorted trunks—SAMUEL and JOHN SMITH.

In December, 1794, Rodgers sailed for Hamburg, but owing to cold and boisterous weather he was compelled to pass the winter in an English port, and did not reach his destination until April, 1795. In September, he sailed from Liverpool for Baltimore and arrived home after a long passage of about three months. The following information found in a Baltimore newspaper gives us a glimpse of his movements in 1796: "Yesterday [September 27] arrived the ship 'Jane,' Captain Rodgers, 70 days from Liverpool—Dry Goods." The character of these goods appears from an advertisement of Yates and Edmonson, Baltimore merchants: "Have imported in the 'Montezuma' from London, 'Rebecca' from Hull, and 'Jane' from Liverpool an handsome assortment of Fall Goods—Consisting of superfine and second clothes, cassimeres, swansdowns, rose and striped blankets, flannels, plaids, bed ticks, checks, stuffs, worsted and yarn hosiery, white and brown linens, velverets,

thicksets, etc., etc., which they offer for sale on the usual terms."

Many incidents of Rodgers's service in the merchant marine have long been forgotten and can not now be brought to light. In an old Baltimore newspaper, however, an extract from the log-book of the "Jane" for July-August, 1796, when she was homeward bound from Liverpool, has been uncovered. It is remembered that England and France were then at war with each other:

"July 27: lat.  $49^{\circ} 44'$ , long.  $18^{\circ} 57'$ : Spoke the ship 'Maria' of Boston, 22 days from Norfolk.

"July 28: lat.  $48^{\circ}$ , long.  $19^{\circ} 37'$ : Spoke the brig 'Thomas' of Newburyport, from Alexandria, bound to Falmouth, 27 days out.

"August 5: lat.  $45^{\circ}$ , long.  $32'$ : Was boarded by the 'La Bayonnaise,' a French ship of 28 guns. She was one of a cruising squadron which had taken upwards of fifty English vessels, all of which they destroyed, taking out their crews. The officer informed Captain Rodgers that five days before they had taken an English South Seaman of about 500 tons and deeply laden with oil, which they had also destroyed.

"August 18: lat.  $45^{\circ} 12'$ , long.  $35^{\circ} 50'$ : Spoke the brig 'Juno' from New York, bound to Liverpool, three weeks out.

"August 31: lat.  $40^{\circ}$ , long.  $60'$ : Was boarded by the 'Ganges,' 74, from St. Christophers, bound to England, with 101 sail of transport under convoy, the greater part of which had French prisoners on board from St. Lucia. There was another 74 in company with the above fleet."<sup>4</sup>

As master of the "Jane," Rodgers exacted absolute obedience from his crew, who early learned to fear and respect him. The habit of command came natural to

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<sup>4</sup> *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 29, 1796.

Rodgers, being probably an inheritance from his Scottish ancestry. In his long career at sea, only once did his men show a disposition to disobey him, and then the circumstances were such as excused them from the charge of mutiny. On one of his passages to Europe in the "Jane," he was carried by adverse winds into the North Sea. His provisions were nearly exhausted, three of his crew were frozen to death in one night, and the rest of his men gave themselves up to sullen despair. When Rodgers ordered them to go aloft and secure the frozen rigging, they refused. Indignant at their pusillanimity, their young captain stripped off his jacket and shirt; and wearing only his trousers and shoes, he himself went aloft, telling his crew he would show them what a man could do. Ashamed of their weakness, they soon followed him, and never afterwards showed a disposition to question his orders. The "Jane" arrived safely in port.

Another incident illustrates equally well the spirit and resolution of young Rodgers. He was in Liverpool in May, 1796, when Sir Banastre Tarleton, a major-general in the British army, was a candidate for re-election as a member of the House of Commons from that city. Tarleton was justly hated by all Americans. During the Revolution he had been a cavalry leader in the British army and had fought in our Southern States where he gained such a reputation for cruelty that "Tarleton's quarter" came to mean a general butchery. One day during the general's canvass in Liverpool for re-election, his enthusiastic followers carried him through the streets, with a howling rabble at their heels. He was seated on a chair which was supported by a party of ship carpenters. One of them bore a large banner representing Tarleton upon horseback charging

a band of fleeing Americans whose national flag was being trampled in the dust by the charger's hoofs. The procession happened to pass a tavern in which Rodgers and several of his countrymen were dining. Disturbed by the shouting on the street, the little party of Americans ran to the window to discover its cause. No sooner did Rodgers catch sight of the insulting emblem, than he hurried down stairs, pushed his way through the crowd, knocked down the astonished standard-bearer, and escaping from the mob returned to the inn. Having armed himself with pistols and sabre, the young captain, accompanied by one of his American friends, went to the hustings and demanded an explanation of General Tarleton. The general disclaimed all knowledge of the insult, and said that he would be glad to meet Rodgers at his committee rooms in the evening. At the meeting Tarleton and his committee disapproved of the objectionable banner, and gave their word that it should be destroyed. Rodgers was carried to his lodgings in triumph by a party of Tarleton's supporters, who in this manner showed their admiration of the spirit and patriotism exhibited by the young American.<sup>5</sup>

During his long career at sea in both the merchant marine and the navy Rodgers never lost a vessel or ran one aground. In his day such accidents were by no means uncommon. Our coasts were neither charted, lighted, nor buoyed; and our ships were often frail craft such as mariners would now refuse to take beyond soundings. The nautical instruments in use were few and imperfect, and the sciences of meteorology, magnetism, and hydrography were little developed. The seas were still infested with pirates. Wars were frequent,

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<sup>5</sup> *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 5, 1796, "Family Sketch of the Life of Commodore John Rodgers," 22-23.



and the belligerents often indulged in robbery and murder. Some of the old ships had an unfortunate practice of suddenly upsetting, without warning. In 1796, Captain David Porter, the father of Commodore David Porter and grandfather of Admiral D. D. Porter, lost his vessel in this manner. Porter and his crew and passengers, fourteen in all, succeeded in manning two small boats, in which they started for the land three hundred miles distant. After spending several days in this plight, they were picked up by a Salem brig a few hours before the coming on of a heavy gale.

When Rodgers left the merchant service in 1797, he had spent eleven years at sea, and was only twenty-four years old, an age when many a young man is still hesitating over the choice of a career. From an apprenticeship before the mast he had risen to a captaincy, the highest post on board a merchantman. He had met every demand of the difficult and exacting craft of a sailor, and had laid securely the foundations of his nautical career. He knew a ship from bow to stern, from keel to main truck, and was equally at home aloft and on deck. His tastes, habits, and character had received that ineffaceable stamp which is given by service on shipboard. He had proven beyond peradventure that those intuitive promptings that led him when a mere boy to leave home and to follow the sea were not mere idle fancies, but were a real call to a life work.



## II. LIEUTENANT AND CAPTAIN IN THE NAVY: 1798-1799

COMMODORE Rodgers's early manhood was coincident with an important period of our naval history. From 1794 to 1801, the navy under the Constitution was established, the navy department was organized, and our naval war with France was fought. Early in 1794, when a need for armed vessels to protect our commerce from the depredations of the Barbary corsairs had arisen, Congress authorized the construction of six frigates, the "Constitution," "United States," "President," "Constellation," "Congress," and "Chesapeake." Until the frigates were completed only six officers, one to superintend the building of each ship, were required. For these, President Washington naturally turned to the officers of the Continental or Revolutionary navy, which service was discontinued in 1785. John Paul Jones, the most brilliant of the early commanders, was dead. Esek Hopkins, the commander-in-chief of the Continental navy, was too old for active service. James Nicholson, its senior captain, was now in his fifty-eighth year. Next to Jones, Commodore John Barry of Pennsylvania, was probably the most illustrious of the Revolutionary heroes, and he it was whom Washington in June, 1794, chose to head the new navy list. The other five captains selected at this time were Samuel Nicholson and Joshua Barney of Maryland, Silas Talbot of New York, and Richard Dale and Thomas Truxtun of Pennsylvania. Each of these six officers had served with distinction in the Rev-

olution. Barry, Nicholson, and Talbot had been captains, and Barney and Dale lieutenants, in the Continental navy; and Truxtun had commanded privateers.

When in 1796, our relations with the Barbary powers became more peaceful, the building of the six frigates was partly suspended, but in 1797-1798, the threatening aspect of our affairs with France caused it to be resumed and to be prosecuted with vigor. In June, 1798, the navy department was organized, with Benjamin Stoddert of Georgetown, District of Columbia, as naval secretary. In the spring of that year an irregular and desultory naval war between the United States and France broke out and continued until February, 1801. This quasi conflict led to a large increase of the navy, which at its maximum strength consisted of fifty vessels, seven hundred fifty officers, and fifty-five hundred seamen.

For naval officers the authorities at Philadelphia first scanned the Revolutionary rolls, as we have seen, but its eligibles were soon exhausted. They next turned to the merchant service, where were to be found many masters and mates, experienced and well seasoned, though still young in years. These vigorous sailors were skilful in seamanship, bold in execution, keen for adventure, and ambitious for distinction. They were the raw material out of which excellent naval officers were to be made. The lieutenants and the midshipmen of the new navy came largely from this source, and many of the captains had spent most of their life on board merchantmen. During the years that Rodgers was sailing out of Baltimore, John Barry, Richard Dale, Thomas Tingey, Raymond Christopher Perry, and Thomas Truxtun were commanding East Indiamen; and the two Stephen Decatur, Samuel and James Bar-

ron, Charles Stewart, Edward Preble, William Bainbridge, and David Porter were employed in the Atlantic trade. Only some two or three of the lieutenants who received appointments in the new navy had served in the Revolutionary navies. Lieutenant Edward Preble, a good friend of Rodgers, was a midshipman in the Massachusetts navy; and Lieutenant James Barron, a bitter enemy, had held a minor office under his father, the commodore of the Virginia navy.

In the spring of 1798 the first three vessels of the new fleet, "Constitution," "United States," and "Constellation," were being officered and fitted out for sea. On March 8, President Adams appointed several of the junior officers of these ships, and on the following day they were confirmed by the Senate. For the "Constellation" he chose Simon Gross of Maryland, first lieutenant; John Rodgers of Maryland, second lieutenant; and William Cowper of Virginia, third lieutenant. Gross soon resigned his office and Rodgers was promoted to be first lieutenant and executive officer of the ship. Besides Rodgers, three other young men whose names long remained on the navy list were appointed lieutenants on March 8, 1798. They were James Barron of Virginia, Charles Stewart of Pennsylvania, and Isaac Hull of Massachusetts. William Bainbridge of New York received a lieutenancy in August, and Isaac Chauncey of the same state in September. The roll of midshipmen was headed by James Macdonough of Delaware. A few numbers below him were David Porter of Maryland, Stephen Decatur Jr. of Pennsylvania, and James Lawrence of New Jersey. O. H. Perry of Rhode Island received a midshipman's warrant in April, 1799.

Rodgers was twenty-five years old when he entered the navy. Quite young for a lieutenant, according to

present standards; but not so young as were a few of the officers of his time when they reached that grade. O. H. Perry became acting lieutenant on the day that he was seventeen. Lawrence held a similar commission when a little more than eighteen, and Ludlow who fell with Lawrence on the "Chesapeake" when seventeen.<sup>6</sup> Stewart and the elder Porter were lieutenants at nineteen, and Farragut was an acting lieutenant at eighteen.

Very small were the wages received by the officers of the Old Navy, Rodgers's first pay was forty dollars a month and his subsistence three rations a day. As a ration was then estimated to be worth twenty cents, his yearly income would amount to six hundred ninety-nine dollars. His captain received seventy-five dollars a month and six rations a day. As a sample ration, and as an illustration of the sailor's bill of fare at this time, we may take that established for a Saturday: one pound of bread, one pound of pork, half a pint of peas or beans, four ounces of cheese, and a pint of distilled spirits.

Rodgers was exceedingly fortunate in his first assignment of duty, for no service during the naval war with France was as desirable as that on board the frigate "Constellation" under her commander, Commodore Thomas Truxtun, who was by all odds the most successful officer of the war, and greatly outshone his naval superiors in rank, Commodores Barry, Nicholson, and Talbot. Truxtun fought the only frigate fights of the little conflict. He began his nautical career about 1765 as an apprentice on board the English packet-ship "Pitt." By 1797, he had had (quoting his own words) "thirty-two long years' experience and constant practice at sea on board various ships from a sixty-four down." Dur-

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<sup>6</sup> Cooper, J. F. *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* (Philadelphia, 1846), vol. ii, 153-154.

ing the Revolution he commanded several privateers and made many captures of British vessels. After that war he entered the merchant service, and engaged chiefly in the China trade. His ship, "Canton," was one of the first Philadelphia vessels to visit the port of Canton, China.

The frigate, "Constellation," was built at the shipyard of David Stodder in Baltimore, in accordance with plans furnished by Joshua Humphreys, a noted marine architect and the chief naval constructor under Washington and Adams. She has been described as one of those happy, first products of our navy that were never afterwards surpassed. In beauty of hull she was not even equalled by the famous "Constitution." The easy swell of her sides and the general harmony of her proportions were incomparable. Her length of keel was 161 feet and her breadth of beam 40 feet. Her tonnage was 1265 tons, and her complement 340 men. Her speed was ten knots on a wind, and twelve and a half knots free. When equipped for sea she carried 100 tons of ballast, 30,000 gallons of water, and four months' provisions. She was rated as a 36-gun frigate.

The navy when Rodgers entered it was new, irregular in its methods, and without *esprit de corps*. On its first officers, and especially on those who had served in the Revolutionary navies, devolved the duty of establishing naval customs, traditions, and standards of habit and action. Truxtun took great pains to enforce a strict system on board his ship. He issued detailed orders to his officers prescribing their conduct towards him and towards each other. No officer was to offer an opinion on the work of the ship unless requested to do so by the captain. No officer was to sleep on shore without the captain's permission. Each officer must be "civil and

polite to every one and particularly so to strangers, for civility does not interfere with discipline." "To obey without hesitation," Truxtun said, "is a maxim always practised by me to my superiors in every point of duty, and the same sort of conduct I expect in return by all officers under my orders." He cautioned his lieutenants against "improper familiarity" with the seamen and the petty officers. He said that when he invited any of the gentlemen of the quarter-deck to his table he would expect "all that reserve when on duty set aside, except what a just decorum and becoming deference may warrant among gentlemen." He greatly lamented that some of the young officers of the navy were addicted to that "detestable vice, drunkenness. . . In fact every drunkard is a nuisance, and no drunkard ought to be employed, and if employed shall ever remain an officer with me." However, he did not mean to imply that a convivial fellow who may become cheerful in company was a drunkard.

Rodgers's first naval duty was the enlisting of seamen at Baltimore for the "Constellation." By the middle of June, 1798, his ship was ready for a cruise, and his commander had received orders to protect our commerce from the depredations of French vessels. Truxtun's cruising-grounds extended from Cape Henry to the northern boundary of Florida. He went to sea late in June and returned to Hampton Roads early in August, not having seen a single French vessel. On August tenth, he received orders from the department to proceed with the "Constellation" and the "Baltimore," Captain Isaac Phillips, to Havana and convoy home a fleet of American merchantmen which the French were blockading in that port. He arrived at Havana about the middle of September, and after cruising in the vicinity of that



port for ten days left for Hampton Roads with sixty merchantmen. Several French cruisers were at Havana when the fleet sailed, but owing to the vigilance of the naval ships they were unable to make any captures. One of the vessels of the convoy, the "America," which was attacked by a French privateer, made a spirited resistance and forced her antagonist to retire, after he had lost three men. All the merchantmen reached the ports of their destination in safety. The "Constellation" arrived at Hampton Roads about the middle of October. The secretary of the navy congratulated Truxtun on his success in bringing home this valuable fleet, estimated to be worth a million dollars, saying that the manner in which he had executed his work would afford satisfaction to the president and the country.

That Rodgers performed efficiently his duties on the "Constellation" during her first cruises we know from the complimentary terms in which his commander recommended him to the secretary of the navy. Truxtun asked that his executive officer be made a captain and be assigned to the command of the ship "Baltimore." Stoddert wrote in reply that Rodgers might have the command of that ship and that he expected soon to make him a captain, but that he could not do so immediately as he wished to "bring forward one or two other lieutenants at the same time to prevent jealousy as well as reward merit." As the "Baltimore" was at sea Rodgers chose to remain on the "Constellation."

For several weeks after his return from Havana, Truxtun was in port preparing his ship for an extensive cruise. Since the French were preying upon our commerce in the West Indies with disastrous effect, having already captured several hundred American vessels, President Adams decided to send thither a large

part of our navy. In December, 1798, orders were issued dividing the fleet in commission into four small squadrons. Commodore Stephen Decatur Sr., with the "Delaware" and one or two revenue cutters, was to proceed to the northern coast of Cuba and cruise between Havana and Matanzas. Commodore Thomas Tingey, with the "Ganges" and two smaller vessels, was directed to guard the windward passage, between Cuba and Haiti. The two principal squadrons were placed under the command of Commodores John Barry and Thomas Truxtun. Barry's fleet consisted of his flag-ship "United States," the frigate "Constitution," Captain Samuel Nicholson, and eight other vessels. His rendezvous was Prince Rupert's bay, St. Dominica, and his cruising-grounds extended from St. Kitts to Barbadoes and Tobago. Truxtun's fleet, as first constituted, comprised his flag-ship "Constellation," Lieutenant John Rodgers; brigantine "Richmond," Captain Samuel Barron; ship "Baltimore," Captain Isaac Phillips; schooner "Virginia," Captain Francis Bright; brig "Norfolk," Captain Thomas Williams; and schooner "Retaliation," Lieutenant William Bainbridge. He was ordered to cruise between St. Kitts and Porto Rico, and beyond those limits when circumstances rendered it advisable.

Truxtun's sailing orders from the department, which were dated December 8, 1798, closed with the following words of exhortation: "The President commands me to express to you his high confidence in your ability, bravery, enterprize, and zeal for your country's interest and honor; and his full assurance that the honor of the American flag will never be tarnished in your hands. And he desires me to add as a particular request that you will excite as much as possible in the officers under your command such a spirit as ought to animate such

men engaged in such a cause, and a high respect for the honor of our flag." Truxtun and his officers needed no prompting to deeds of valor from Adams and Stoddert, for they were keen for a chance to distinguish themselves. Many of the officers and seamen of the "Constellation" were Marylanders. The executive officer was from Harford County, as was also the fourth lieutenant, John Archer, whose family is still an honored one. Andrew Sterrett, the third lieutenant, and Ambrose Shirley, the sailing-master, were Marylanders. Midshipman David Porter, now eighteen years old, was a Baltimorean. Second Lieutenant William Cowper was a Virginian, as was also Midshipman Arthur Sinclair. Midshipman James Macdonough was from Delaware. Four of Truxtun's officers, Rodgers, Porter, Macdonough, and Sinclair, later reached the highest rank in the navy.

Truxtun arrived on his station about the middle of January, 1799, and at once began active cruising. He employed the smaller vessels of his squadron in convoying American merchantmen to safe latitudes to the northward of the islands. For the first three weeks no noteworthy incidents occurred, with the exception of the chasing of several vessels and the exchanging of shots with the French forts at Basseterre, Guadaloupe. At this time there were only two French ships of war in the West Indies, the "Volontaire," 40, and "Insurgente," 36. These frigates had lately arrived out from France, and had signalized themselves by capturing the schooner "Retaliation," 14, Lieutenant William Bainbridge. Hearing of their arrival, the secretary of the navy at Philadelphia wrote to Truxtun cautioning him to be on his guard, and suggesting that if the frigates were not blockaded in port by Barry or the English it would

probably be best for him to unite his squadron with Barry's. Truxtun was not the man to adopt this suggestion, for he had no notion of subjecting himself to the orders of his superior. If distinction was to be won, he would win it for himself.

Early in February Truxtun, having ordered the "Norfolk" and "Richmond" to attend to a fleet of merchantmen in need of a convoy, left Basseterre, St. Kitts, in his flag-ship. He first stretched under Montserrat towards Guadaloupe and thence under the lee of Antigua and Barbuda. Having seen only two merchantmen and a British frigate, he decided to change his cruising-grounds. He therefore ran down towards Nevis—with important results, as may be seen from the following account written by his executive officer, Lieutenant John Rodgers:

"At meridian on the 9th instant, Nevis bearing W.S.W. distant 5 or 6 leagues, saw a large ship to the southward; bore away and gave chase. At 1 p.m. made the British privateer signal for the day; it not being answered, made the American signal; neither of which being answered, it was suspected the chase was an enemy, notwithstanding she had an American ensign flying at the mizzen peak. Soon after, these suspicions proved well founded, for the American ensign was hauled down and the French national flag hoisted in its place and a gun fired to windward; upon which our brave commander, who well deserves the appellation, ordered the ship cleared and everything got ready for battle, according to our established rule on board this ship.

"At 2 p.m. the chase carried away her maintopmast, and bore away before the wind for a short time, after which, finding we continued the chase, she hauled up within eight points of the wind, on the starboard tack.

At a quarter past 3 p.m., it blowing extremely hard, and our ship being rather crank, we ran close under the enemy's lee for the sake of working our guns with more facility. As soon as we got abreast of the enemy, she hailed several times, but no answer was given. The commodore ordered myself with the other lieutenants commanding divisions to fire directly into the hull as soon as we could bring our guns to bear, and to load with two round shot principally, during the action. All the orders being complied with, we raked her several times in the course of the action, which went on to our most sanguine expectation.

"At a quarter past 4 p.m. the enemy struck. At the time she struck we lay directly athwart her stern and should certainly have sent her to the infernal regions had we fired whilst in that position. When she struck I was ordered to board and take possession and to send the captain and first lieutenant on board the "Constellation," which was done, and an exchange of prisoners immediately took place. Although I would not have you think me bloody-minded, yet I must confess the most gratifying sight my eyes ever beheld was seventy French pirates (you know I have just cause to call them such) wallowing in their gore, twenty-nine of whom were killed and forty-one wounded. She proved to be the famous French frigate 'Insurgente,' mounting 40 guns and 8 swivels, with 411 men.

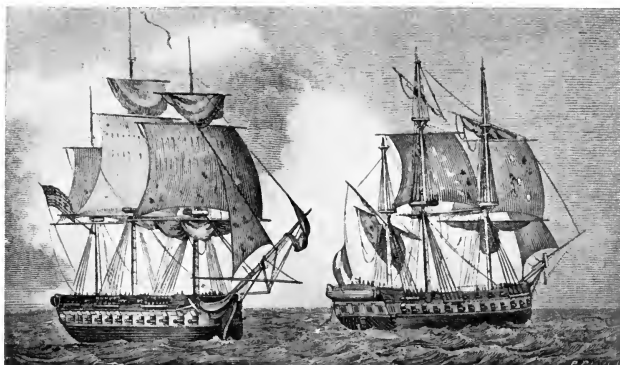
"The action of only one hour and a quarter has given the arms of the United States at sea one of the fastest-sailing and finest frigates in the French navy, and that too with much less injury to the 'Constellation' than is usual in captures of this sort, and without much blood being spilt on our side, having only one man killed and two badly wounded, with two slightly wounded. Know-

ing that you have the success of our infant navy at heart, and are particularly attached to the 'Constellation,' I have been induced to give you this particular detail. Though I am not in the habit of boasting, yet I candidly tell you I should feel happy with the same officers and same men on going alongside of the best 50-gun ship the all-conquering French Republic have—at any hour."<sup>7</sup>

Some tactical details of the fight may be added to Rodgers's account. The engagement began about 3:15 p.m. on February 9. The "Constellation," being on the port quarter of the "Insurgente," poured a broadside into her, which was returned. The French captain at once luffed his ship with a view to boarding the "Constellation," but owing to the loss of her maintopmast, she did not quickly respond, and Truxtun was able to run ahead and rake her as he passed her bow. The American captain now took a favorable position on the starboard side of the "Insurgente" and gave and received broadsides for the larger part of an hour. At 4:20 p.m., the "Constellation" drew ahead, and again raked the enemy's ship. Next she passed astern, and raked her antagonist for the third time. The "Constellation" now took an advantageous position directly athwart the stern of the "Insurgente" and forced her to surrender. The French ship hauled down her flag about 4:30 p.m.

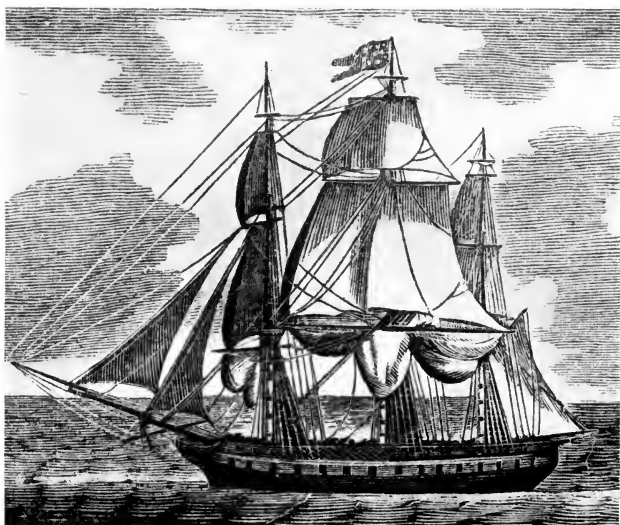
The "Insurgente" lost seventy men, of whom twenty-nine were killed, twenty-two badly wounded, and nineteen slightly wounded. The "Constellation" had four men wounded. One of them, a seaman, died of his wounds; and another, Midshipman Macdonough, lost a foot. To these four men may be added a fifth, killed by Lieutenant Sterrett for deserting his quarters. "One fellow," Sterrett wrote, "I was obliged to run through

<sup>7</sup> Claypoole's *American Daily Advertiser*, March 13, 1799.



THE "CONSTELLATION" AND "INSURGENTE," 1842

From John Frost's *Book of the Navy* (New York, 1842), 82. Engraved by P. Roberts from a drawing by William Croome



THE UNITED STATES FRIGATE "PRESIDENT," 1816

From the *Temple* (Boston, 1816), appendix





the body with my sword, and so put an end to a coward. You must not think this strange, for we would put a man to death for even looking pale on board of this ship." The sails and rigging of both vessels were much damaged, but the "Insurgente" suffered more than her antagonist. Her mizzentopmast was shot away, her spanker was riddled, and her braces, bowlines and foretopsails were much cut up. Truxtun's foretopmast was struck by an eighteen-pound shot and rendered useless. At the time of its injury Midshipman Porter was stationed in the foretop. He hailed the commodore and informed him that his mast had been struck, but Truxtun was too busy to attend to it. Porter thereupon with great presence of mind climbed up amid a shower of balls and cut away the slings, let down the yards, and thus saved the mast.

The "Insurgente" carried two more guns than the "Constellation," but in weight of metal she was inferior to the American ship. She mounted forty guns; four 36-pound carronades, two 24's, two 18's, twenty-four 12's, and eight 6's. The "Constellation" mounted thirty-eight 24's and 12's. Captain Barreaut, the commander of the "Insurgente," was greatly embarrassed in maneuvering his ship by the loss of her maintopmast. Notwithstanding the skill and gallantry that he displayed in the fight, he was found guilty of not making sufficient resistance by a court martial that tried him at L'Orient in October, 1799. The court, however, decided that he was innocent of all charges tending to discredit his seamanship, courage, and honor. Truxtun reported to the secretary of the navy that Barreaut defended his ship manfully.

Next to Truxtun his executive officer, John Rodgers, who commanded the first division of guns on the gun-

deck, deserved most credit for the success of the "Constellation." The second and third divisions were in charge, respectively, of Lieutenants Cowper and Sterrett. Truxtun reported that the zeal of these three officers could not be surpassed. "I intend to give Lieutenant John Rodgers an order to command the 'Insurgente,'" the commodore wrote to Stoddert on February fourteenth. "He was one of the first lieutenants appointed, and has a claim to being among the first promotions; but a very strong one for behaving well and being the first lieutenant of the 'Constellation' at the capture of the first governmental ship of any consequence ever made by the arms of the United States at sea since our being known as a nation."<sup>8</sup> The last statement is true if Truxtun means to say that the "Insurgente" was the largest ship captured by our navy since our treaty of peace with England in 1783. Before that date one larger vessel, the "Serapis," the prize of John Paul Jones, was taken by our arms.

Soon after the "Insurgente" surrendered, late in the afternoon of February ninth, Truxtun ordered Rodgers to take possession of her as prize-master, which he at once did, accompanied by Midshipman Porter and eleven seamen. While the crew of the prize were being removed to the "Constellation," night set in and a gale began to blow which separated the two ships. One hundred sixty-three prisoners still remained on board the "Insurgente." Noting the weakness of the prize crew, which consisted of only two officers and eleven seamen, the prisoners began to concert measures for retaking the ship. Unfortunately for the Americans, the gratings had been thrown overboard, the handcuffs had disappeared, and the decks were encumbered

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<sup>8</sup> *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, March 14, 1799.

by the dead and by fallen spars, sails, and rigging. On perceiving the intention of the prisoners, Rodgers acted with great promptness and resolution. Seizing all the small arms, he drove the mutinous men into the lower hold of the ship, and stationed at each hatchway a sentinel armed with a blunderbuss, a cutlass, and pistols, and gave him orders to fire should the men attempt to force a passage. For two days and three nights Rodgers guarded the prisoners and navigated the ship, being ably assisted by Midshipman Porter. Only by the presence of mind, courage, and vigilance of the young commander were the prisoners held in subjection.<sup>9</sup> Finally the gale abated and the "Insurgente" rejoined the "Constellation." About noon of February thirteenth, the two ships arrived at Basseterre, St. Kitts.

As England and France were then at war, the inhabitants of this British town were delighted to see the "Insurgente"; and many of them, including the chief dignitaries of the island, visited the ship. Truxtun was asked to fire a salute in order that the government might have an opportunity of expressing its good-will by returning the compliment, and he willingly complied with the request. The British commander-in-chief of St. Kitts sent Truxtun a letter of congratulation and offered him every service in his power. Taking advantage of this kindness, the commodore decided to place the wounded Frenchmen in a hospital on shore, and he ordered Rodgers to direct their removal. Soon after his arrival at Basseterre, he formally thanked his officers and crew for their gallant conduct during the fight and told them that they should be honorably mentioned to President Adams.

<sup>9</sup> Goldsborough, C. W. *The United States Naval Chronicle* (Washington, 1824), 132-133.

Early in March the two ships, having been repaired and refitted, were again ready for active cruising. The "Insurgente" had been supplied with a crew drawn chiefly from unemployed sailors at Basseterre, and Rodgers had received a written order to take command of her.

As Truxtun wished to show his prize under American colors to the French governor of Guadaloupe, the vessels sailed for that island. The following story of their cruise is told. In accordance with a plan agreed upon, the "Constellation" and "Insurgente" separated before they reached Guadaloupe. When they came in sight of the island they appeared to bear up for Basseterre, one under French and the other under American colors. As they approached each other they began firing and pretended to be engaged in a fierce combat. A French privateer schooner that came to the aid of the supposed French vessel did not discover the deception until too late and was captured. The story appears to be in the main true. The schooner is believed to have been the "Union," which was taken by Truxtun on this cruise. The three vessels returned to St. Kitts on March fifteenth.

Here Truxtun found the secretary of the governor of Guadaloupe, who demanded in the name of his master the restoration of the "Insurgente," and declared that if she was not surrendered the governor would give orders for the capture of all American vessels without discrimination. Truxtun answered that he had acted in obedience to the orders of his government and that the threats of the governor would not induce him to disobey them. After trying in vain the effect of promises, entreaties, and imprecations, the secretary returned to Guadaloupe, leaving Truxtun (according to one au-

thority) "muttering, as customary, 'Vengeance and the Great Nation'." <sup>10</sup>

In the latter part of March the two ships were again cruising on their station, but they made no captures. As they were in need of repairs and as the term for which the crew of the "Constellation" had enlisted was about to expire, Truxtun decided to return to the United States. On the seventh of May, he and Rodgers left St. Kitts, and thirteen days later they arrived at Hampton Roads. Almost a year had elapsed since they first went to sea in the "Constellation."

The welcome extended to Truxtun was more cordial and general than any hitherto received by an American naval officer. Previous to his arrival his victory had been celebrated in the principal cities of the Union. On March thirteenth, a public dinner had been given at Baltimore in honor of the brave commander and his officers and crew. Soon after his return the citizens of Norfolk gave him a dinner, on which occasion several companies of militia turned out to assist in acclaiming the hero. On the Fourth of July at Baltimore the navy and its recent victory were toasted and the health of the commodore was drunk after the following sentiment had been proposed: "Captain Truxtun; may his name be honored by every American for his late victory, and prove a terror to every insurgent." The commodore received congratulatory letters from all parts of the Union. Ships were christened for him, and Truxtun hats were all the vogue. President Adams and Secretary Stoddert warmly thanked the officers and crew of the "Constellation" for their victory, which had served to stimulate national pride and to strengthen the naval policy of the Federalists. Truxtun's success

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<sup>10</sup> *Naval Chronicle* (London), vol. i, 539.

attracted the attention of the English, and especially of the merchants of Lloyd's coffee-house, London, who presented him with a gift of plate as a token of their regard. Captain Barreaut, late of the "Insurgente," wrote to him that he united all the qualities that characterize a man of honor, courage, and humanity.

Truxtun's chief officer, Lieutenant Rodgers, came in for a full share of praise and glory. He was invited to attend some of the public festivities given in honor of the victory. The manner in which an appreciation of his services was expressed on one occasion may be seen from the following note extracted from a Baltimore newspaper for 1799: "On Monday morning, July 1, a number of seamen, lately belonging to the 'Constellation,' to evince their respect for their former lieutenant, John Rodgers, carried him through the principal streets of Baltimore on a chair elegantly decorated. On passing Market street ( Broadway ), Fell's Point, the procession was saluted by a discharge of cannon." Soon after his arrival at Hampton Roads from St. Kitts, Rodgers received a substantial recognition of his gallant conduct by being promoted to a captaincy in the navy.

Secretary Stoddert would have made Rodgers a captain in the winter of 1798-1799 had he not been waiting to promote several other lieutenants at the same time. In January, 1799, he wrote to Truxtun that Rodgers might be given command of the "Baltimore" when she arrived at St. Kitts. Later, after the young lieutenant had received the "Insurgente," he wrote that Rodgers certainly deserved that ship, but that since his continuing in command of a frigate might hurt the feelings of the captains he would have to yield his place to one of his seniors in rank. Truxtun was in no mood to see his first lieutenant displaced by a captain, but his protests

to the department were unavailing. Early in June Stoddert detached Rodgers from the "Insurgente" and ordered him to report for duty at Baltimore. At the same time the secretary sent him a captain's commission, dating it March 5, 1799, probably the date of his order from Truxtun to command the "Insurgente." Rodgers was the first lieutenant in the navy under the Constitution to be regularly promoted to the rank of captain.<sup>11</sup> After him the next lieutenants to receive captaincies were Edward Preble, John Mullanby, and James Barron. In the Continental navy, John Paul Jones was the first lieutenant to be made a captain. Only a few lieutenants of our navy, of whom Rodgers was the first, have commanded frigates. He was the youngest officer to be thus honored, with the exception of Stephen Decatur Jr., who commanded the "Constitution" at the age of twenty-five.

The "Insurgente" was bought by the government and added to the ships of the navy. Rodgers's share of the purchase price, as a captor, was sixteen hundred eighty dollars. His successor in command of the prize was Captain Alexander Murray, eighteen years his senior in age. For nine months during 1799-1800, Murray cruised in various parts of the Atlantic, stretching as far eastward as the coast of Spain. He was succeeded in command by Captain Patrick Fletcher, who sailed from Hampton Roads on August 8, 1800, and was never heard of afterwards. It is supposed that his vessel was lost in the "equinoctial gale" of that year.

<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Patrick Fletcher, who was promoted to a captaincy on September 9, 1798, had been temporarily appointed lieutenant on July 7 for special reasons, with the understanding that he was soon to be made a captain. — U.S. Senate. *Journal of Executive Proceedings*, vol. i, 285.





### III. COMMANDER OF THE "MARYLAND" 1799-1801

EARLY in June, 1799, Rodgers was detached from the "Insurgente" at Norfolk and was ordered to Baltimore to attend to the equipping of the ship "Maryland." About the middle of the month he received the following letter from Secretary of the Navy Stoddert: "I do myself the honor to enclose your commission as captain of the navy service of the United States. It is the President's desire that you take command of the 'Maryland' at Baltimore. You will be pleased therefore to take charge of that ship; assist Mr. Yellott in having her fitted, and as soon as you think her in a condition to receive her men, let me know it that the recruiting service may commence. The men ought not to be engaged too soon, nor must the ship after she is ready wait for the men. You will know how to avoid both extremes."

The "Maryland" was rated as a twenty-gun sloop of war. She actually carried twenty-six guns, probably 12's and smaller calibres. Her burden was three hundred eighty tons, and her complement was one hundred eighty men. She was built by the merchants of Baltimore and presented to the federal government. There was nothing exceptional about the "Maryland" unless it was her carved work. This was quite elaborate, and if we may believe the Baltimore *Federal Gazette*, it reflected no small honor on the progress of American arts. It was executed in a masterly style by a Philadelphia artist, and was described by the *Gazette* as follows:

"The head is a beautiful female figure, in a standing position ( the pedestal and figure measuring eight and a half feet ), representing the goddess of commerce and plenty; her right arm is extended, holding in her hand a medal displaying a vessel and insignia of commerce, which she appears to be contemplating; her left arm retains the cornucopia reversed; the trail-boards present emblems of the arts and sciences, shipbuilding, agriculture, etc., etc.; the whole emblematic of the wealth, pursuits, and characteristics of the American people. On the taffrail is the seal of Maryland, representing the figure of justice and peace, with proper insignia; it is supported on the right by a genius with a book and pen, preparing to record the honors which the ship may confer on her country; while on the left, the genius of music is ready to strike his lyre in celebration of the rising greatness of America."

About the first of August, Captain Rodgers began to officer and man his vessel. In announcing that Rodgers had opened a rendezvous for seamen and marines at Fell's Point, the *Federal Gazette* said that, owing to the excellence of the "Maryland" and the bravery and fame of her commander, it had no doubt that the ship would soon obtain a complete crew of hardy, brave, and enterprising Americans. Rodgers instructed his recruiting officers to enter none but sound and healthy men and to suffer no indirect or forcible means to be used to induce seamen to enlist. His sergeant of marines announced that recruits would find on board ship good meat, drink, and comfortable lodging.

The commissioned and warrant officers of the "Maryland" consisted of two lieutenants, a lieutenant of marines, sailing-master, surgeon, surgeon's mate, purser, boatswain, gunner, carpenter, sailmaker, and six or

eight midshipmen. Her petty officers were two master's mates, a captain's clerk, cook, steward, cooper, carpenter's mate, master-at-arms, two boatswain's mates, an armorer, and six quarter gunners. As it was customary at this time to select the officers of a ship chiefly from the state in which she was built, Rodgers's vessel was officered largely with Marylanders. Her surgeon, Dr. Anderson Warfield, was a member of a prominent Baltimore family. Her surgeon's mate, Dr. Gilliss W. M. R. Polk, came from Princess Ann, Somerset County. One of her lieutenants, George Cox, was from Maryland; and, it is believed, all her midshipmen were from that state. Her other lieutenant, Henry Seton, was a New Yorker.

In order that everyone on board the "Maryland" might "immediately become acquainted with the duty of the ship," Rodgers, on August twenty-ninth, issued a list of forty-four regulations, and posted them under the quarter-deck in plain sight of the officers and crew. These regulations show the careful attention of the commander of the "Maryland" to the details of his ship's economy, his scrupulous regard for cleanliness, his provision for regular gun-practice, and his insistence upon the minute observance of naval customs. They enable us to form a vivid picture of the unique life of the Old Navy, whose ships were little seagoing monarchies in which the captain reigned supreme. The conduct of every officer and sailor was minutely regulated. In no other way could a large number of men, brought close together within the narrow confines of a ship and representing every variety of temper, breeding, and character, live in amity and concord. The population of the old ships was at least fourfold denser than is that of the modern ones. The following extract from Rodgers's

regulations will give one a notion of the daily routine on board the "Maryland":

"13. The weather side of the quarter-deck is reserved for the walk of the captain, or in his absence the commanding officer of the watch, except in performing any urgent duty of the ship it is necessary to dispense with such etiquette.

"14. The time glass is to be regulated every evening at eight o'clock by my watch; and the quarter-deck is always to be kept clear of clothes, lumber, and dirt; and the ropes flemished-coiled, or hung upon the pins.

"15. No person is to be struck on the quarter-deck if it can be avoided, or improper language made use of thereon. Good usage is directed to be strictly observed to all those who merit it, and those who do not shall be punished as I may hereafter direct.

"16. No duty is to be done of a Sunday but on extraordinary occasions, except such as washing or wetting the ship, trimming the sails, or what may be required by the printed Instructions.

"17. The warrant and petty officers together with the seamen, ordinary seamen, and marines are to breakfast at eight o'clock and have their dinner regularly at noon. One hour is allowed them at each meal. The common duty for which all hands are employed is to be concluded at four p. m. on every day.

"19. All persons on board must be shaved, combed, and clean dressed by ten a. m. on every Sunday morning, and in case of failure (unless prevented by some extraordinary circumstance) they are to be served no rum or spirits on that and the following day. And in order that each may be prepared to comply with this order by having their linen washed and dried in the fullest and most complete manner, cleanliness being so

conducive to health, I do hereby direct that no duty be exacted from any man of a Saturday except washing and wetting the ship as before mentioned, spreading and furling awnings, and such other duty as cannot be dispensed with.

"20. Every morning the boatswain or his mates are to overhaul the rigging fore and aft and from each mast-head, including jibboom, bowsprit, gaff, etc., and report what may be seen out of order or wanting repair.

"21. Due attention must be observed that no candles are wasted or any kind of stores improperly used, and all expenditures must be regularly entered in order that returns may be made to me agreeably to the Instructions of the President.

"22. All lights, except such as I may specially suffer, are to be put out every evening at eight o'clock in the winter and nine in the summer. The officer of the watch may however on particular occasions permit a light below in a lantern, but he is to be answerable for any improper use that is made of this indulgence. The winter regulation is to commence on the first of November and end on the first of March. The summer regulation is to continue the other seven months of the year.

"23. No fire is to be suffered in the galley after eight or nine o'clock aforesaid, except what may be necessary for lighting of matches and making preparations for battle.

"24. The salt meats, agreeable to Act of Congress, are to be delivered out every evening before sun-down to the cook, who is to be answerable and to have the same well washed and soaked by changing the water in steep tubs every four hours. The flour, peas, and other provisions are to be served out every morning in due time for the cook. The rum or spirits is to be served

out twice a day to prevent the ill effects of the whole allowance being given at once. A scuttle cask of water is to be kept filled and lashed near the mainmast before the barricado for the use of the ship's company, and special care is to be taken to prevent any sort of waste of this precious article. All sorts of slops and clothing must be issued only on a special order from me, as well as all such other articles in the purser's department as are found enumerated in the Act of Congress of July 1, 1797.

"25. The wet clothes of the crew are to be got up to dry as often as opportunities offer. The orlop-deck is to be cleaned out every morning and always after meals. Twice a week it is to be well washed and scrubbed, and after it is dry hot vinegar is to be sprinkled fore and aft, or it is to be fumigated by having devils burnt below. Previous to the apartments of the crew being washed, etc., all the chests are to be got up, and the hammocks stowed in the netting, etc., and when the devils are to be burnt below, the tarpaulins are to be put on, the same being previously washed and cleaned. At all times when the weather is fair the gratings are to be taken off and the wind-sails are to be got up, and all the air let into the ship that is possible.

"29. The sails are always to be neatly handed in the order directed at the time, the yards nicely squared, and the stays, back-stays, and every rope hauled taut, and the decks and sides kept clear of dirt. The cook must therefore be prevented as well as all others from throwing grease or dirty water on deck or to touch the sides or bends of the ship with the same.

"31. The sea lieutenants (alternately) shall exercise the men stationed at the cannon whenever I shall direct that duty to be performed. The lieutenant of

marines, the marines; and the master at arms, the seamen, etc., in the use of small arms.

"35. The colors in port are always to be hoisted at sunrise and hauled down at sunset, provided the weather is not too windy and otherwise injurious to them.

"37. As soon as the ship comes to an anchor in any port or place the fore and main lightning conductors are immediately to be put up and led down the topmasts and standing-backstays over the sides into the water, and as often as appearances of heavy gusts at sea attended with lightning shall make it prudent to get up the conductors aforesaid the officer of the watch is desired to do it without loss of time.

"38. Whenever a captain of the navy of the United States comes on board, the side is to be attended by the boatswain and to be manned with four hands, and if at night four lights are to be held in hand; for a commodore, six hands and six lights; and for all other commissioned officers and private gentlemen, two hands and two lights. The same attention is to be given and observed on going out of the ship.

"41. As I propose to pay some attention to the midshipmen becoming conversant in signals, etc., the colors, pendants, etc. are to be superintended by one of those gentlemen, who will keep the same in repair.

"42. It is absolutely necessary that all seamen and others belonging to a man of war should be well skilled in the use of great guns on shipboard, otherwise the greatest abilities in a commanding officer taking positions will always be rendered abortive. The crew of the 'Maryland' will at all times on the drum beating to arms repair to their respective quarters. Every person being in his station, the officer commanding each division is to see every article belonging to each cannon

ready in its place and in perfect order; such as gun tackles, train tackles, sponge and rammer, ladle and worm, powder-horn and prickers, powder-man with cartridge-box and powder, round shot, bar and grape shot, crow and hand-spikes, bed and quoin, wads in a net, match in a lynch stock, swabs, water tubs, and all other apparatus appertaining to the use of the cannon and for preventing accidents from the same in fighting. . . The lanterns at night are to be placed on deck when ordered by me. Everything being prepared and in its place and all lumber cleared away, the exercise will begin as follows:

1. Silence.
2. Take care.
3. Cast loose your guns.
4. Level your guns.
5. Take out your tompions.
6. Take off your aprons.
7. Prick your cartridges and prime.
8. Handle your crows and handspikes and point your guns to the object.
9. Blow your match.
10. Fire.
11. Invent.
12. Sponge your guns.
13. Put in your cartridge.
14. Wad your cartridge and ram home.
15. Shot to your wad.
16. Wad to your shot and ram home.
17. Run out your guns."

In the latter part of 1799 we had four naval stations in the West Indies. Their names, commanding officers and flag-ships were as follows: St. Kitts or Guadaloupe station, Commodore Thomas Truxtun, "Constellation,"



36; St. Domingo station, Commodore Silas Talbot, "Constitution," 44; Surinam station, Captain Daniel McNeill, "Portsmouth," 24; and Havana station, Master-commandant William Bainbridge, "Norfolk," 18. The Surinam station lay along the north coast of South America and extended from French Guiana to the Dutch island of Curaçoa. Its vessels, however, cruised chiefly off the Guianas, whose principal settlements or towns at this time were Cayenne, Surinam, Berbice, and Demerara. The rendezvous of the station was Surinam.

Rodgers's sailing orders from Secretary Stoddert were dated September 5, 1799, and read as follows: "The moment the 'Maryland' is ready for sea, and you should not wait for a few men, you will please to proceed to Surinam where you will join Captain McNeill of the 'Portsmouth' and other American vessels on that station, with which you are to coöperate under the command of the senior officer of that station. Captain McNeill, as long as he remains, will be the commander. Your object must be to give all possible security to our trade by capturing the enemy's vessels wherever to be found on the high seas, and by occasionally convoying our own; though the most protection is afforded to the whole trade by capturing the vessels which annoy it. You will take under convoy any merchant vessels ready, as soon as you are, to proceed to Surinam. I have nothing to add but the President's assurance of confidence in your activity, zeal, and bravery, and my own good wishes for your success and glory."

September thirteenth Rodgers sailed from Baltimore and arrived on his station about the first of October. The "Maryland's" movements for several weeks after her arrival may be followed in a letter of one of her officers

to his friend at home, dated Surinam, November 21, 1799:

"This being so good an opportunity direct for Baltimore, I embrace it to inform you of our arrival here from a cruise of four weeks to windward, without any success, meeting or falling in with nothing but our friends. This coast appears to be perfectly clear of French privateers. We lay off and on Cayenne for two days, so near in as to distinctly see the tri-colored flag flying at the fort. On our cruising to windward we fell in with the United States frigate 'Insurgente,' whom we kept company with two days. She is the only ship that we have seen that can sail with us, and I am of the opinion she can outsail us. She is a remarkably fine frigate. After parting with her we fell in with the United States ship 'Portsmouth,' Captain McNeill, whom we have been cruising with about three weeks. We have both returned here to water, etc., etc., which we have commenced filling. Where and when we shall go from this is not yet known, as we are under the command and orders of Captain McNeill. We have had a fair trial of sailing with the 'Portsmouth,' and outsail her shamefully. I do think we could run her nearly out of sight in twenty-four hours. I have no news to relate you, except there is a report here, and much credited, that there are three French frigates now on this coast. This being the case, it is more than probable we shall soon move from this; perhaps with the British sloops of war 'Daphne' and 'Cynthia,' now lying here."<sup>12</sup>

A few weeks before Rodgers arrived on his station the British captured Surinam, a Dutch colony, and their influence superseded that of the French, which had pre-

<sup>12</sup> *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 24, 1799.

dominated for several years. The consequences of this political change to our interests are well set forth in a letter of Rodgers to the secretary of the navy, dated September 20, 1800:

"The British being in possession of Surinam totally prevents there being any French cruisers on its coast, owing to their having no place to vend their prizes; and it is impossible to get them into Cayenne owing to a continual strong current setting to leeward. . . . The American trade to Surinam appears to be very considerable at present, which is owing possibly to the numberless restrictions it has been laid under since the British have had possession; molasses being the only article an American can export from thence with any safety, without being subject to seizure by British men of war, as has been the case in several instances. Indeed I am not able to say how far American property is safe after it passes through the hands of individuals of this colony, or whether the colony is subject to the Prince of Orange and under the protection of the British Crown, as is held out to strangers by both the parties; or whether it is a conquest to the British Crown and a real British colony. However, I believe that the latter is most likely, or at least they intend to make it such."

About December 1, 1799, Captain McNeill sailed for the United States and left Captain Rodgers in command of the station. During the winter of 1799-1800, Rodgers cruised chiefly to the windward of Surinam, since all vessels that visited the Guianas might be met with in that region. About the middle of April, 1800, he left his station with a convoy which he had collected at Surinam, Berbice, and Demerara. At St. Kitts he picked up a few more merchantmen. Having seen his fleet safely out of the West Indies, he returned to his station

where he arrived early in June. A few weeks later he put in to Surinam for water and provisions, where an interesting incident in connection with a slaver occurred. At this time the slave traffic in the West Indies and on the Spanish Main was very active, as may be seen from a few statistics. More than five thousand slaves were being annually imported to British Guiana. In 1798, one hundred and sixty slave vessels from London, Liverpool, and Bristol carried fifty-seven thousand negroes from Africa to the West Indies. Since the cost of a negro in his native land was from seventy-five to eighty dollars, and his selling price in the islands from two hundred fifty to four hundred dollars, large profits were realized from this nefarious traffic. On May 10, 1800, an act was passed by our government forbidding our citizens to transport slaves on board American vessels from one foreign port to another. In attempting to enforce this act Rodgers encountered serious difficulties, concerning which he wrote to the secretary of the navy as follows:

“On the 9th of July the schooner ‘Ranger’ of Charleston (S.C.), Edward Easton, master, and belonging to Thomas Cave, distiller of that place, with sixty-two slaves on board from the coast of Africa, arrived in the river Surinam; after which of course she was to be considered within the jurisdictional limits of that colony. And in consequence of my having been made acquainted with the act passed by the government of the United States on the 10th day of May last for the further prevention of importing slaves in vessels sailing under the American flag, and altho I had received no orders from you in addition to those previous to the late act of government, yet I conceived it my duty to notice such violence, agreeable to the nature and intention of

the law, particularly as I had reason to believe that you had not been afforded an opportunity of sending me further instructions. In consequence I requested of the governor of the colony to deliver over to me the above schooner and cargo in order that I might proceed with her as the laws of the United States direct, to which request the governor refused to comply; after which I went to him in person and desired to know if he would order her out of the colony (her admission into the same being contrary to their laws); to which he also refused, saying that the master of said schooner had protested that the vessel was not seaworthy. To this last subterfuge, my conception of the meaning and intention of my commission prevented me from making any further observations than that I conceived I ought to be the judge whether she was seaworthy or not, altho I must be permitted to say I felt highly incensed at him as a protector of the inhuman violators of the laws of the United States. And I have only to add that Governor Frederici has coats of all colors, and he will change as often as it is his interest so to do. He is a Hollander by birth and principle, with all the address, intrigue, and artifice of a Frenchman. He positively told me on the arrival of the aforesaid schooner that, if after searching the laws relative to her situation he found her delivery within the jurisdiction within the colony impracticable, he would immediately order her out of port. However, he did not comply with his word, but permitted the slaves to be sold."

On July seventeenth, Rodgers put to sea from Surinam on a cruise to the windward of Cayenne. For his movements until September tenth, his own narrative may be followed:

"On the 26th of July the Devil's Islands bearing S.S.E.

distant nine leagues, I fell in with and recaptured the Portuguese brig 'Gloria da Mar,' mounting four carriage guns, with a crew of ten men, and having a cargo of rice, cotton, and leather on board. Said brig had been captured by the private armed schooner 'Cherry' of Bordeaux and ordered to Cayenne. At the time I captured her she had been thirteen days in possession of the French. After the recapture of the above vessel, I cruized in the neighborhood of Cayenne until the 2nd of August, without any further success. By this time the term of service of the crew drawing near to its conclusion, I bore away with the intention of collecting such vessels as were at Surinam, Berbice, and Demerara, and returning home; and arrived at the former place on the 4th of August, and on the 8th dispatched the barge with Lieutenant Davis and five men for Berbice and Demerara to acquaint the Americans of my intention of touching at both places in order to afford them the benefit of convoy.

"On the 9th of August I left Surinam with seven vessels under convoy and steered for Berbice and Demerara in order to collect such others as were ready to depart. At Berbice I found only two vessels, neither of which was ready for sea; and at Demerara where I arrived on the 13th found only four, neither of which could be got ready until the 17th, at which instant I sailed, the convoy having increased to twelve in number including the prize brig 'Gloria da Mar.' The winds being far to the northward of east and several of the vessels being dull sailers, I was not able to weather the islands; which being the case I touched at Martinique on the 24th to give such vessels as were ready an opportunity of joining the convoy, but I found the United States brig 'Eagle' there for that purpose. However, as it was

strengthening the convoy, and I conceived could be attended with no inconvenience to the service, I joined both convoys together, leaving Martinique on the 25th, from whence we steered for St. Kitts where we arrived on the 28th. By this time I found that our water and provisions would not hold out, therefore I replenished these articles. . . .

"At St. Kitts I had the Portuguese brig 'Gloria da Mar,' a recapture of the 'Maryland,' anchored at Basseterre road, and immediately proceeded with the 'Maryland' to old road for the purpose of watering, after which on my return to Basseterre, Mr. [David N.] Clarkson the [American] agent, informed me that the Court of Admiralty had claimed the right, with reference to the laws of nations, of determining the cause between the parties concerned in said vessel. Sir, I presume you are well acquainted with the interest the British Courts of Admiralty have in administering their laws in cases of like nature; therefore as an apology in vindication of my own conduct for not sending this vessel to the United States, for the present, I enclose you the letters between the agent, Mr. Clarkson, and the judge of that court; and beg leave to decline saying anything further on the subject until I have the honor of seeing you myself which I shall take the earliest opportunity to do after my arrival at Baltimore. . . .

"On the 31st of August departed from St. Kitts with thirty-five sail of Americans and a number of English vessels. On the first of September we arrived at St. Thomas, which place we should have left on the day following, but was prevented by many of the vessels not being quite ready for sea and the winds prevailing far to the northward. On the 3rd instant, which was the intended day of sailing, we were forced into the harbor

of St. Thomas by a hurricane, for the particulars of which I beg leave to refer you to my journal, which shall be forwarded immediately on my arrival. After we got into port the winds continued to the southward until the 10th instant, which prevented the fleet getting out of port until that epoch, at which instant we departed with the convoy consisting of fifty-two Americans and several English vessels."<sup>13</sup>

On reaching safe latitudes many of the merchantmen parted company with the "Maryland" and "Eagle" and pursued their own course to home ports. Rodgers entered the Chesapeake late in September and on the last day of that month his vessel was reported to be at the mouth of the Patapsco. He spent the winter of 1800-1801 at Baltimore refitting his ship. By the time she was ready for sea the naval war with France was at an end. On September 30, 1800, a treaty between France and the United States was signed at Paris; and on February 18, 1801, the Senate, after amending it, ratified it. These amendments rendered necessary another ratification by the French government. President Adams chose Rodgers and the "Maryland" to make the voyage to France with the treaty, and President Jefferson selected Mr. John Dawson, a Congressman from Virginia, to serve as the official bearer of the document. The captain's sailing orders from Washington were dated March 21, 1801, and read in part as follows:

"Mr. Dawson, who takes the treaty to France, leaves this tomorrow to embark on board of the 'Maryland' for Havre de Grace in France. You will receive him and treat him with all the attention and respect due to his character, and proceed with him to the place of his destination as soon as he is ready for the voyage, which

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Navy Department. *Miscellaneous Letters*, vol. i, 146.



will be in a day or two after his arrival at Baltimore. I have before written you on the subject of the stores to be laid in for his comfortable accommodation on the voyage, and have nothing to add on that subject. You will wait at Havre de Grace, or any port in France should circumstances compel you to enter any other port, until you receive Mr. Dawson's dispatches from Paris for the government of the United States."

Besides Dawson, the passengers of the "Maryland" were a Mr. Dumbrugeac, his secretary and servant, and several American gentlemen. Dumbrugeac carried dispatches to Napoleon from General Toussaint, the Santo Domingan revolutionist and statesman. The "Maryland" sailed for France on March twenty-second. As she got under way she fired a salute of sixteen guns, which was answered by Fort McHenry. Early in May she arrived at Havre, where she was boarded by a yacht of the French Republic, which conveyed Rodgers and Dawson ashore. The latter at once proceeded to Paris, while Rodgers returned to his ship, doubtless after having paid his respects to the local government. An officer of a British blockading squadron, which lay off Havre at this time, in writing home, on July fourteenth, gives us a glimpse of Rodgers during his stay in France: "The 'Maryland' American frigate, Captain Rodgers, is still lying at anchor in the outer harbor of Havre. During the tempestuous weather we have had for the last fortnight, wind S.S.W., she has been sailing about with the squadron for safety. The American captain dined on board the commodore's ship the other day, and by him we learn that there are five frigates in Havre ready for sea, and also a vast number of gun-brigs etc."<sup>14</sup> No doubt these latter were

<sup>14</sup> Poulson's *American Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 7, 1801.

some of the vessels with which Napoleon expected to invade England.

Soon after Dawson arrived in Paris Napoleon gave him an audience, and early in June he dined with Joseph Bonaparte. In expectation that Napoleon would attend promptly to the treaty, he delayed the sailing of the "Maryland" in order that she might carry home the news of the ratification. The First Consul however was in no hurry about concluding the business. Finally Dawson decided to hold the "Maryland" no longer, and on July tenth, he wrote to Rodgers as follows: "It is now my wish that you should sail with the first fair wind, and most sincerely do I wish you an agreeable voyage to the bosom of your friends and fair one. It has been my wish that you should take back the ratification, especially after the delay that has taken place, and I have used every means to accomplish this. Some believe that the First Consul will declare the ratification on the 14th when there will be a fete more brilliant and expensive than any heretofore." Dawson was mistaken as to this, for Napoleon did not ratify the treaty until July thirty-first, and then in an amended form.

On July fifteenth, the "Maryland," having on board as passengers Messrs. John Purviance and W. Barney of Baltimore and Captain Izard of South Carolina, sailed from Havre on her homeward voyage. Purviance carried dispatches from William Vans Murray, one of our envoys to the French government, to the state department at Washington. Rodgers also bore public letters and dispatches. The "Maryland" arrived at her home port on August twenty-eighth. Not a few Baltimoreans expected that she would have among her passengers the noted patriot and freethinker, Thomas Paine. It had been reported that Dawson had visited

Paine in Paris and had delivered to him a very affectionate letter from President Jefferson, in which he was invited to return to America on board a public vessel. Soon after Rodgers came to anchor, his ship was visited by a local editor, who later published for the edification of the Baltimore federalists and church folk the information that "we have examined minutely on board the 'Maryland' and we can with confidence assure our readers that the Monster Thomas Paine is not amongst the number." On the twenty-ninth of August, Rodgers proceeded to Washington with his dispatches. On returning to Baltimore he paid off and discharged his crew and dismantled his ship. In accordance with the policy, that the government was then pursuing, of disposing of all the smaller vessels of the navy, the "Maryland" was sold in the fall of 1801, fetching twenty thousand two hundred dollars.

Rodgers was now twenty-eight years old. He had been in active service in the navy for three years and a half. For more than two years he had been a captain, the highest naval rank known to the law. A few of the older officers who entered the navy as captains had held more important commands than had he, but none of those who entered as lieutenants had played so conspicuous a part in the naval war with France. As executive officer of the "Constellation," he participated in one of the two frigate fights of the war, and with the other officers of his vessel received the thanks of the president and the secretary of the navy. For several months he was in command of the "Insurgente," the principal prize of the war, and one of our largest frigates. For the larger part of a year he commanded the "Maryland" and the Surinam station. Lastly, he had the honor to be chosen to convey to France the bearer of the

new French-American treaty, a mission that he performed to the entire satisfaction of the government.

#### IV. VOYAGES TO SANTO DOMINGO.

1801-1802

**I**N the spring of 1801, while Captain Rodgers was at Baltimore preparing the "Maryland" for her voyage to France, Congress passed an act that had a far reaching effect on the navy. The date of its passage, March 3, 1801, served for many years as a fixed point for the reckoning of all naval events. It was entitled "an act providing for a naval peace establishment and for other purposes." It authorized the dismissal of two-thirds of the naval personnel, and the sale of all the vessels of the navy, with the exception of thirteen frigates, the "United States," "Constitution," "President," "Chesapeake," "Philadelphia," "Constellation," "Congress," "New York," "Essex," "Boston," "Adams," "John Adams," and "General Greene." Only nine captains, thirty-six lieutenants, and one hundred fifty midshipmen were to be retained. The grade of master commandant was abolished.

The act of March 3, 1801, retired not a few excellent officers. Secretary Stoddert gladly escaped the painful work of enforcing it, a task more congenial to Jefferson and the Republicans, who were opposed to the navy. Soon after the new administration entered upon its duties in the spring of 1801, the dismissing of the officers was begun; but it proceeded rather slowly. Stoddert's successor as secretary of the navy, Robert Smith of Baltimore, was not appointed until the fourteenth of July. He was a brother of Samuel Smith, who for many years represented Maryland in the United States

Senate. This prominent family was founded by John Smith, a Baltimore merchant and Revolutionary patriot and statesman. It is recollected that the Smiths owned the ship "Jane," of which Rodgers was for several years master. From 1801 to 1809, Robert Smith was secretary of the navy, which position he resigned to become secretary of state. He was a kind, affable gentleman, and a warm friend of Rodgers whose oldest son, Colonel Robert Smith Rodgers, was named for him.

The number of captains in our navy during the war with France was thirty-one. By the spring of 1801 several of these had resigned, as they did not care to remain in the service. After the captain's list had been thus reduced, it was still in excess of the authorized number, nine. Secretary Smith decided that in making reductions he would be governed chiefly by the age and the Revolutionary service of the captains. On this principle, Rodgers's name was left off the accepted list. Moreover, two of the Revolutionary veterans who were retained, Nicholson and Murray, were from Maryland. President Jefferson had much to do with the selecting of the names, as may be seen from the following letter that Smith addressed to Rodgers, dated October 22, 1801: "Under the provisions of the statute entitled 'an act providing for a naval peace establishment and for other purposes,' the President has deemed it necessary to reduce the captains to the prescribed number, nine. And in the discharge of this duty he has the unhappiness to find that highly as he regards your merits he cannot retain you in commission consistently with the principles of selection that have been adopted. You will I trust be duly sensible how painful it is to me to make you this unpleasant communication, and be persuaded, Sir, my sensibility on the occasion is greatly increased

by considerations resulting from a personal knowledge of your worth."

Rodgers's status from October 22, 1801, to August 25, 1802, is somewhat uncertain. After writing the letter quoted above, Smith decided to retain Rodgers. Indeed there is excellent evidence that the letter was never delivered. The next official letter that Rodgers received is dated August 25, 1802. In this he is addressed as captain of the navy. His status during these ten months seems to be virtually that of a captain on leave of absence. Since he suffered no diminution of rank, his connection with the service was unbroken.

The naval captains on August 25, 1802, in the order of their rank, were as follows: (1) John Barry, (2) Samuel Nicholson, (3) Richard Dale, (4) Richard V. Morris, (5) Alexander Murray, (6) Daniel McNiell, (7) Samuel Barron, (8) John Rodgers, (9) Edward Preble, (10) James Barron, (11) William Bainbridge, and (12) Hugh G. Campbell. From this list it is seen that the number of captains was still in excess. Smith had retained both Truxtun and Talbot, but they had resigned; Talbot in September, 1801, and Truxtun in March, 1802. In 1804, Thomas Tingey, who had been retired under the peace establishment act, was again made a captain, this time by an act of Congress. If we count Talbot, Truxtun, and Tingey, the total number of captains retained was fifteen. Of these, with the exception of Bainbridge who was born in 1774, Rodgers was the youngest. Most of them were many years his senior. The captains above Rodgers in rank, with the exception of Morris, were Revolutionary veterans. Tingey, Preble, and Campbell are properly classed with the old worthies, while Rodgers, James Barron, and William Bainbridge were of a younger generation, and had

made their reputations during the French War. They entered the navy as lieutenants, and several of their naval contemporaries, Stewart, Hull, Chauncey, the younger Decatur, and the elder Porter, were in 1801 near the top of the lieutenant's list. In the ten years succeeding the French War the Continental captains largely passed away, and the new school of officers took their places.

As soon as Rodgers learned in the fall of 1801 that there was no immediate prospect for employment in the navy, he turned again to the merchant service. Recently a profitable trade had sprung up between the United States and Santo Domingo. This was fostered by General Toussaint L'Ouverture, the governor of the island, who had established a new government, had instituted many reforms, and had greatly encouraged commerce and agriculture. With an eye to the main chance, Rodgers purchased the schooner "Nelly," loaded her with American products, and on the fourth of December sailed from Baltimore for Cape Francois, on the northern coast of the island, where he arrived on the nineteenth. Here he remained about two months, selling his cargo and buying a new one. Soon after his arrival at the Cape, Rodgers met our consul or commercial agent to Santo Domingo, Colonel Tobias Lear, and he there laid the keel of a long and intimate friendship with that interesting man. Lear was a native of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a graduate of Harvard, and for many years the private secretary of Washington. His second wife was the widow of Major George Augustine Washington, a nephew of General Washington; and his third wife was Miss Frances Dandridge Henley, a niece of Mrs. Martha Washington. He had recently entered our diplomatic service, in which con-



nection there will be occasion to mention him more than once. At Cape Francois, Rodgers saw for the first time the colonel's son, Benjamin Lincoln Lear (a child by his first wife, Miss Mary Long), concerning whom something will be said in a succeeding chapter.

While Rodgers was in Santo Domingo he witnessed some of the important events of the war between the French and General Toussaint. Indeed in one of these events, the burning of Cape Francois, he was no insignificant actor. It is recollected that in 1801-1802, Napoleon made peace with England and began the establishment of a colonial empire in America, which according to one plan was to extend from French Guiana on the south to Canada on the north, and was to include the French West Indies, Florida and Louisiana. Since Santo Domingo was to be an important part of the empire, Napoleon decided that its subjugation should be the preliminary step in the carrying out of his vast scheme. He proposed to capture Toussaint, overthrow the rule of the blacks which the great negro leader had established, and organize a new government in sympathy with the imperial policy of France. In the winter of 1801-1802, a large French expedition was sent to Santo Domingo. The naval contingent was under Admiral Villaret Joyeuse, and the general commanding all the forces was Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc, whose courage and military skill had won him the esteem of the great conqueror. His wife was Napoleon's favorite sister, Pauline, an extremely beautiful woman, whose statue, Victorious Venus, by Canova, is still a famous work of art. She accompanied the expedition, as did also Jerome Bonaparte, now a naval lieutenant, and soon to displease his illustrious brother by his marriage

with the Baltimore heiress and beauty, Elizabeth Patterson.

On arriving at Cape Samana on the east coast of Santo Domingo, Leclerc divided his forces into four divisions, with a view to operating simultaneously in different parts of the island. For himself he reserved the main division. His objective was Cape Francois, off which port he arrived on February 2, 1802, with fourteen sail of the line, nine frigates, and five thousand troops. He anchored some five or six miles from the harbor, and at once demanded the surrender of the town and the forts that defended it. These were in possession of General Christophe, the commander of the forces of Toussaint. On receiving Leclerc's peremptory demand, Christophe, knowing that the blacks were much weaker than the French, asked for time to consult Toussaint in respect to his reply. Leclerc refused the request and prepared to attack the town. The following day, a deputation of leading citizens and officials, accompanied by Colonel Lear, visited the French general and urged him to make some arrangement with Christophe that would save the town from destruction, which calamity they had every reason to fear. Leclerc, with much severity of manner, refused to listen to their proposals for conciliation and said that he would certainly enter the harbor on the following day.

The inhabitants of the cape and the men on board the vessels in the harbor were greatly alarmed, as their lives and property were in imminent danger. Several American merchants lived in the town and owned dwellings, warehouses, and other goods of various kinds. Thirty-five American ships were in the harbor. Lear and Rodgers took upon themselves the difficult task of saving the lives and property of their countrymen. Lear

had a private audience with Leclerc, who promised to protect the Americans; and he also visited Christophe and obtained his consent to let the Americans residing in the town embark on board the ships.

Owing to unfavorable winds Leclerc was unable to enter the harbor on the fourth. Just before dark on the evening of that day one of his ships stood toward the cape and was fired upon by one of the forts. All the other forts immediately began a general fire, a preconcerted signal for the blacks to burn and abandon the town. Flames burst out simultaneously in many places, and an awful night of conflagration ensued. Ninetenths of the town was burned. Among the public buildings that were destroyed were the churches, the arsenal, barracks, marine offices, magazines, and the executive offices of the government. "Sugars or other property either rolled in liquid fire along the streets or mounted in cloudy volumes to the skies." The savage blacks pillaged the burning houses and murdered the defenceless citizens, in their fury sparing neither women nor children. One American, a South Carolinian, who was determined to save his property or perish with it, tarried on shore and was killed in his own house, his body being almost consumed by the flames.

Scorning all personal consequences when the lives of his fellow men were at stake, Rodgers spent the whole of this fearful night on shore. He placed himself at the head of a band of friendly negroes and led them in their work of rescue and succor. The full details of his heroic and energetic efforts are not known, but Lear wrote later that he "displayed that dauntless spirit which he is know to possess" and "by his good management and intrepidity secured the lives of many whom he got off from the flames, and was the means of saving

several houses." After this dangerous and laborious task was ended, he returned to the wharf to take passage on a boat for his ship. Here he was unexpectedly overtaken by a party of women and children fleeing from the infuriated negroes. He hurried the fugitives into his boat, and while attempting to shove it off, fell in the midst of his pursuers who seized him and made him prisoner. Being a man of almost Herculean strength, he was not long in their power; for watching his opportunity, he broke away from his captors, escaped to his boat, and gained his ship.<sup>15</sup>

Lear had also spent an exciting night. Fearing that the blacks after burning the town would carry out their threat to destroy the vessels in the harbor and massacre the defenceless men, women, and children on board of them, he decided to go to the French admiral and urge him to send a flotilla of armed boats to protect the shipping. He left the town in the night-time, passed the forts safely, and at daylight was received on board the French flag-ship. On stating his errand, the admiral promised to get under way at once with his whole fleet, and at noon of the fifth he anchored within the harbor. He immediately landed some troops; and the marauding blacks, who were still pillaging the burning dwellings, fled from the town.

In his treatment of Americans, Leclerc seems to have been governed by no settled convictions, first blowing hot and then cold towards them. Much pleased with Rodgers's heroic efforts, he gave him a special permission to sail in the "Nelly" for Baltimore and return with a load of supplies, which, it is said, were intended for the French troops, and for which Rodgers was to

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<sup>15</sup> *Washington National Intelligencer*, March 8, 1802, "Family Sketch of the Life of Commodore John Rodgers," 25.

be well paid. Leclerc laid an embargo upon all other vessels in port. The "Nelly" reached Baltimore on the third of March, and ten days later, having obtained a cargo, cleared for Cape Francois where she arrived about the first of April. The Americans were now being treated shamefully by the French. On the tenth of April, the functions of Lear were suspended, and a week later he left the island. A few days before he sailed Rodgers and a Captain Davidson of Philadelphia were seized by a guard of grenadiers and thrown into a loathsome and pestiferous prison, and their property was confiscated. For a time they were confined in separate dungeons, and forced to live on bread and water; and visits from their countrymen were denied them. The severity of their imprisonment, however, was soon relaxed somewhat, and they were granted the liberty of mingling with the common vagabonds of the prison-yard.

Leclerc gave the captains no reasons for their arbitrary arrest. He is said to have told Lear that he imprisoned Rodgers because the young captain, after having received special permission to return to America, had during his stay there spread unfavorable reports of the operations of the French at the cape and of their expedition to Santo Domingo. After an imprisonment of about three weeks Rodgers and Davidson were liberated, and were ordered to leave the island within four days and never to return, "under pain of death." So peremptory were the orders that had not the unfortunate captains obtained passage on board the schooner "Pomona," they would have been compelled to put to sea in the long-boat of Davidson's ship. A part of their property was restored to them before leaving Cape Francois, and eventually they recovered all or nearly all

of it. The "Pomona" arrived at Baltimore on May 22, 1802.

Rodgers soon went to Havre de Grace to visit his kin and friends, with whom he had spent but little time since the day that he left home, a mere boy, to seek his fortune. But few young Americans of his age had seen as many foreign lands or participated in as many adventures as had he. His active, outdoor, masculine life had toughened his fibres until they glowed with vigorous health. He had acquired all those qualities that mark the sailor and naval officer—simplicity, candor, loyalty, self-confidence, firmness, and resolution. Matured beyond his years, he was returning to his native place for a brief holiday. His fame had preceded him, for his services in the navy and at Cape Francois had been fully reported in the newspapers of the land. The villagers welcomed him home as a fellow townsman who had reflected honor upon themselves. The old men recalled legends of his boyhood; and the young women were captivated by his handsome face, chivalrous manners, and commanding presence. One of the Havre de Grace maidens, Miss Minerva Denison, with whom Rodgers became acquainted on this visit, soon kindled in his heart the flame of a tender passion.

No better family stock for the growing of military officers can be found than that from which Miss Minerva Denison sprang. Her early paternal ancestor in this country, Captain George Denison of Stonington, Connecticut, served under Cromwell. He was wounded at the battle of Naseby, and during his illness was nursed by Ann Borodell, who on curing the captain married him. She was always called "Lady Ann," and was remarkable for her beauty and force of character. Soon after his marriage Denison emigrated to Massachusetts

and later moved to Connecticut. The elder Winthrop once referred to him as "the young soldier lately come out of the wars with England." In Connecticut he held many offices of trust, and became a noted Indian fighter—the Miles Standish of his colony. Miss F. M. Caulkins, the historian of New London, Connecticut, says that "our early history presents no character of bolder and more active spirit than Captain Denison. He reminds us of the border men of Scotland."

Fourth in direct line of descent from this ancestor was Gideon Denison, of Norwich, Connecticut, who was born in 1753. In 1780 he married Jerusha Butler, also of Norwich. He was a merchant, and spent several years of his early married life in Europe. For a time his young family lived in Savannah, Georgia, where he settled them under the care of a brother. As Mrs. Denison was a New Englander in all her tastes, she naturally disliked slavery and the southern manner of living, and preferred to make her home in the North. Accordingly, about 1794, she established her family near Philadelphia. Mr. Denison was then investing considerable sums of money in real estate in Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee; and he is said to have purchased the ground upon which Nashville was later built. Since Havre de Grace, Maryland, seemed destined to grow into a large city, Denison in 1795-1797 bought several farms adjoining the village and containing more than eighteen hundred acres. On one of the farms, which had belonged to the Reverend John Ireland, a noted Episcopalian minister of Harford County in his day, there was a country house, with all the ornaments and conveniences of such an establishment—ample grounds, trees of beech, oak, locust, and chestnut, gardens, orchards, barns, and outhouses. Its

ministerial owner had christened his home Sion Hill, a name that it now bears. The house has never been remodeled, and may still be seen in the purity of its colonial architecture, being one of the most interesting relics of the Revolutionary era in Maryland. It is picturesquely situated about two miles westward of Havre de Grace, on a considerable elevation that commands a beautiful view of the Susquehanna, the Chesapeake, and the rolling countryside. To this day it has retained its air of rest and quiet, dignified reserve, and gentle refinement. A placid melancholy broods over the old home, so rich in hallowed memories. It is owned by several of Commodore Rodgers's grandchildren, and in the summer-time is occupied by Rear-admiral Frederick Rodgers of the United States navy.

In 1795, Denison moved his family to Sion Hill. He had four children, Henry, Minerva, Louisa, and Eliza. Each of the three daughters married naval officers. Louisa married Commodore Alexander Wadsworth, an uncle of the poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Eliza married Commodore J. D. Henley, a nephew of Mrs. Martha Washington and a brother of Mrs. Tobias Lear. He fought at Lake Champlain in 1814 under Macdonough and later commanded the frigate "Congress" on a voyage to China, the first American naval vessel to visit that country. Minerva was some years older than her sisters. She had been taught the rudiments of learning, together with music, dancing, and other accomplishments in private boarding-schools at Philadelphia and Baltimore. In a charming narrative of her girlhood written late in life for her grandchildren Mrs. Minerva Denison Rodgers gives the following account of her admission into Mrs. Fullerton's school in Philadelphia:



“My father took me to the city and introduced me to the lady under whose charge I was to be placed. She was a kind and lady-like person and received me in a motherly way which quite won my heart. There were one or two other girls who had also been deposited there by their parents on the same day. We were assigned sleeping rooms with some of the parlor boarders; and I well recollect Mrs. Fullerton taking me by the hand and leading me to the door of her niece’s room and asking her to take her choice of a roommate of the three young girls that stood at her door. She took a survey of the party and quietly said, ‘I will take the little girl with fair hair, because she looks so nice and sweet.’ I told this to mother afterwards, and it seemed to gratify her motherly vanity.”

Concerning her husband’s courtship, Mrs. Rodgers wrote as follows:

“I remained quietly at Sion Hill following an uneventful life until I met Captain Rodgers who afterwards became my husband. I was at this time about seventeen. This forms a turn in my life from which I must date its greatest joys as well as sorrows. At this time Havre de Grace was a very different place from what it is at the present time. Several wealthy men, tempted there by the prospect of its becoming a great city, had bought land and built for themselves very handsome residences. Among them Colonel and Mrs. Hughes, our nearest and most intimate neighbors, and Mr. Pringle, a retired merchant of Baltimore, with his interesting family. In the town of Havre de Grace and just across the river were many pleasant families, which made the society a very agreeable one, especially as they were all hospitable and fond of gaiety. Colonel and Mrs. Hughes had no children, but were both

fond of society and happy in dispensing their hospitality to their many friends. They had a delightful house, with beautiful and cultivated grounds. It was Mrs. Hughes's delight to superintend her flowers, and she was very ambitious about them and her fine fruits which were cultivated with much care. I well remember her green and terraced lawns where the first violets and primroses and early spring flowers were to be found. The perfume of the violets and hyacinths still seems to have a power to transport me back to that lovely spot and to the freshness of my early years. These charming people entertained a great deal, and were very fond of inviting strangers from a distance to visit them. I have spent many happy hours there, and was always most warmly welcomed by them both. They were especially fond of young people and enjoyed being surrounded by them, and always called upon me to sing and play upon the piano for them.

"One fine morning in June when I was just seventeen, my mother received a note from Mrs. Hughes saying that Captain Rodgers had been invited to dine with them and a gentleman to meet him; they had other guests in the house and their table was full; but they desired that my mother would come over in the evening and take tea with them, bringing Minerva with her. Accordingly we went. I had previously heard Captain Rodgers spoken of. His reputation was known to the country. He had recently returned from Santo Domingo where he had been traitorously imprisoned by Leclerc. He had been much talked of and published in the papers. I had known his mother and sisters and his brother Alexander. I had heard them speak of John, but had never seen him as he was seldom at home, most of his time being spent at sea.



COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS, *about 1803*

From a portrait in the possession of Rear-admiral John A. Rodgers,  
Bremerton, Washington



“When we arrived at Mount Pleasant we were asked into the parlor where the ladies, who had just returned from the dinner table, were discussing Captain Rodgers. One maiden lady, who was out of health and not very amiable in her feelings, said that she thought he was very rough and abrupt, and she did not like him. She thought he had a bad countenance, with his black and heavy eyebrows. She said he had talked at dinner of an action in which he had been engaged when the deck was slippery with blood, and that she had nearly fainted with horror. There was a young lady, however, who spoke up quickly in contradiction and said, ‘Well I think him very handsome. I think he resembles this picture’—holding up a book which she had been reading. After she had laid down the book, my curiosity induced me to take it up, which I found to be Schiller’s ‘Robbers’, and the picture that of the hero of the play, Karl von Moor. Soon after that the gentlemen came in from the dinner table. I was sitting at one end of a card table which was placed near the wall. Upon the table was a large French clock which effectually concealed any one sitting behind it. Captain Rodgers came in with the quiet determined step which I learned to know so well, and sat down at the further end of the table from me. He was acquainted with all the other ladies in the room, and Mrs. Hughes did not at first present him to me, forgetting I suppose that I had not met him. The ladies, having already criticised him, had nothing further to say. As the conversation began to flag, Colonel Hughes proposed that we should walk in the garden. While I was sitting at the table I thought that I would take a peep at the gentleman on the other side of the clock. I bent forward to do so, and to my consterna-

tion I found a pair of piercing black eyes fixed upon me. I withdrew my gaze hastily. The gentlemen all arose and walked into the garden, while the ladies remained in the drawing room. Captain Rodgers did not, I think, return to the house, as I do not recollect seeing him that evening.

“When my mother and myself were going home, I asked her what she thought of Captain Rodgers, who seemed to be the hero of the day. She replied that she did not like him at all, that his countenance was dreadful, and that his black and heavy eyebrows gave him such a forbidding look they made her tremble to look at him. I said, ‘I have hardly seen him, but from the little glance which I had, I should think he was a man of violent temper, though first impressions are not always correct.’ A few days after this my mother had occasion to go down to the village to make some small purchases, and when she returned I was sitting in my room with my book and my work. She came up and stood at the foot of the bed, taking out sundry little articles from her satchel. I thought she looked very smiling, and I said ‘Well, mother, who and what have you seen that you looked so pleased?’ She replied, ‘I have met Captain Rodgers, and I have entirely changed my opinion of him. I think him very handsome and agreeable.’ I said, ‘That is a very marvellous change, and to what is it to be ascribed?’ She then told me that he had been exceedingly polite and friendly, and had followed her into the store and had assisted her to make her purchases, and was in fact so very kind that she did not know to what she should ascribe it. She supposed that his brother Alexander had told him who she was. She said that his eyes and teeth were splendid, and that when in conversation his

whole appearance was so bright it made him very fascinating. A day or two after that his brother Alexander drove him to Sion Hill to make a morning visit, and he introduced him to me. After that his visits became frequent and his attentions to me very conspicuous. However, he was ordered to sea and our love affairs made no great progress.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rodgers, Minerva Denison. *Recollections of My Life*, 7, 12-16.





## V. FIRST CRUISE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: 1802-1803

SOON after our difficulties with France were settled early in 1801, we began a war with Tripoli; and the scene of our naval activities shifted from the West Indies to the Mediterranean. The reader will readily recall the early history of the Barbary States—the Phœnician settlements, the Punic Wars, the Vandal Invasion, and the conquest of the Saracens. In the sixteenth century, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli became tributary to the Turkish sultan at Constantinople, and Morocco established a native dynasty. In the same century, the Barbary States organized an extensive system of piracy, blackmail, and extortion, by means of which they realized a large revenue. The rich argosies of the Christian nations, homeward bound from the Levant, Africa, and the East Indies, afforded the corsairs an abundant harvest. They enslaved their captives and forced them to perform the menial labor of Barbary. The torments suffered by these wretched slaves, whether chained to galleys at sea or driven like brutes to their tasks on shore, are indescribable. An old petition in behalf of some poor Englishmen in Barbary speaks of them as being “in miserable captivity, undergoing divers and most insufferable labor, such as rowing in galleys, drawing carts, grinding in mills, with divers such unchristian-like works most lamentable to express and most burdensome to undergo, withal suffering much hunger and many blows on their bare bodies, by which cruelty many,

not being able to undergo it, have been forced to turn Mohammedans."

The ransoming of the slaves by their friends at home was the source of no little income to the Barbary rulers. The biography of Cervantes affords a celebrated instance of this form of extortion. The great novelist was captured by the corsairs, and spent several years in captivity before he regained his freedom. In *Don Quixote* he had the satisfaction of describing the ruler of Algiers as "the homicide of all human kind . . . every day he hanged a slave, impaled one, cut off the ears of another, and this upon so little animus or so entirely without cause that the Turks would own he did it merely for the sake of doing it and because it was his nature."

Another source of revenue was the money and the presents that were given to the Barbary rulers by the Christian nations as the price of peace and forbearance. A few examples will show the character of this blackmail. In 1712, the Dutch obtained immunity from the Algerine navy by contributing to its well-being ten 24-pounders, twenty-five large masts, five cables, four hundred fifty barrels of gunpowder, two thousand five hundred great shot, fifty chests of gun-barrels, a quantity of small arms, and five thousand dollars in cash. After the Venetians had defeated Tunis in the war of 1784-1792, they agreed to pay forty thousand sequins for a treaty of peace. About the same time Spain gave one hundred thousand piastres as the price of immunity from piracy. In 1796, England purchased the friendship of the dey of Algiers and the release of some English prisoners at a cost of about one hundred thousand pounds.

Not infrequently the diplomatic agents of the Chris-

tian powers were treated in an insulting and outrageous manner by the Barbary potentates. On one occasion the bey of Tunis ordered the consul of France to kiss his hand. At first the Frenchman refused, but he was soon moved to osculate when the bey threatened him with death if he did not immediately comply. When once upon a time a Maltese cook of a foreign consul at Algiers became objectionable to the ruler of that state, he was taken by force from the consul's house and sent away in irons. In 1808, a Danish consul was seized, heavily ironed, set to labor with slaves, and made to sleep with vagabonds in a common prison; his wife died from fear and alarm. It was about this time that one of the French consuls in Barbary was killed.

The explanations given for the disgraceful and criminal submission of the Christian peoples to the outrages committed by the Barbary pirates are not altogether satisfactory. Why should these strong civilized powers permit weak semibarbarous states to prey upon their commerce, enslave their citizens, insult their officials, and levy tribute and blackmail? Was it fear, cowardice, self-interest, inertia, preoccupation, or the habit of submission that led to their debasement? Doubtless each of these forces had its restraining effect. The interest of the great trading nations moved them to purchase immunity for their own vessels and leave their weak rivals to be crushed by the corsairs. A recollection of the really formidable states of Barbary of the sixteenth century caused the resources and courage of these fast-declining powers to be greatly exaggerated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The jealousy of the Christian peoples of each other made their united action against the Moslems difficult or

impossible. Moreover the larger questions of public policy pushed aside such small ones as the suppression of piracy in the Mediterranean.

The corsairs began to capture our merchantmen in 1784, in which year they took the brig "Betsey." In the following year they captured a second vessel, and later committed other depredations upon our commerce. Considerable property belonging to our citizens fell into their hands and not a few Americans were enslaved by them. Opinion as to the measures to be taken to prevent these outrages was divided. Some of our statesmen favored the creation of a navy and the use of force, while others thought that the European plan of paying tribute would prove to be the cheapest and the best policy. Finally it was decided to try both methods. In 1794, we began the construction of a navy; and in 1795, we bought a peace with Algiers, agreeing to give her annually maritime stores to the value of \$21,600. In the following year we obtained a treaty with Tripoli for nearly \$56,000. In 1797, as the cost of treaties had risen, we entered into one with Tunis at an estimated expense of \$107,000. In 1797-1798 we built the frigate "Crescent," loaded her with naval stores, and sent her to the dey of Algiers as a gift. In 1800, the dey received another shipload of presents, this time in the "George Washington," Captain William Bainbridge, which vessel and captain he impressed into his service, forcing them to carry an Algerine ambassador and a cargo to the sultan at Constantinople. This indignity offended our national pride and went far towards creating a sentiment favorable to the forcible maintenance of our rights in the Mediterranean.

The pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, on learning that the rulers of Algiers and Tunis were obtaining

more tribute from the United States than he was obtaining, became dissatisfied, and demanded a ship of war such as had been given to the dey of Algiers. Angered at not receiving it, he wrote President Adams a menacing letter. Finally His Royal Highness ordered the flagstaff at the American consulate to be cut down; and thereupon our consul, James L. Cathcart, left the pasha's dominions, and we were at war with Tripoli. This dramatic declaration of hostilities took place in May, 1801.

Anticipating some such action from Tripoli and fearing that Algiers and Tunis might molest our commerce, the government at Washington early in the spring of 1801 fitted out a squadron of four ships for service in the Mediterranean. Commodore Richard Dale, a seasoned officer who had served under John Paul Jones during the Revolution, was chosen commander-in-chief and the frigate "President" was designated as his flag-ship. Dale arrived at Gibraltar on July 1, 1801, and soon proceeded up the Mediterranean. His timely appearance at Algiers and Tunis had a restraining influence upon the rulers of those states, who were becoming dissatisfied and were grumbling over assumed grievances. Several times he showed his vessels off Tripoli; but, since his powers were limited, he did not accomplish much in that quarter. The most notable event of his cruise was the gallant capture of a Tripolitan polacre by the "Enterprise," Lieutenant Andrew Sterrett. Early in 1802, Dale and his ships returned to the United States, and another squadron was sent out.

Dale and his successors in the Mediterranean had many difficult problems to solve, the most important of which related to Tripoli, with which country we

were actually at war. The fleet maintained headquarters at Gibraltar, Malta, and Syracuse, none of which ports was convenient to the city of Tripoli, the capital of the country. Gibraltar was distant twelve hundred miles, Malta two hundred fifty, and Syracuse three hundred fifty. In the winter, the late fall and the early spring the heavy northerly gales that prevail on the coast of Tripoli rendered active operations quite precarious. Even in the favorable season operations against the Tripolitan capital were attended with serious difficulties. The city was situated on a small bay that was cut off from the sea by a barrier of rocks and reefs, which made navigation for large ships very dangerous. Its fortifications were manned by about twenty-five thousand Arabs and Turks, and its forts and batteries mounted one hundred fifteen guns. Its harbor was protected by a flotilla of gunboats.

In addition to blockading and bombarding Tripoli, our squadron had to pursue and capture the ships of the enemy at sea, and it had to protect American merchantmen by occasionally convoying them from port to port. For a long time the department at Washington sent the commander-in-chief insufficient and improper means for the performance of the work that devolved upon him. Ships arrived in the Mediterranean at uncertain times, and were compelled soon to return owing to the expiration of the term of enlistment of their crews. Communication with the secretary of the navy was irregular and infrequent. Moreover, the president took a half-hearted interest in the war, and urged his commanders to bring it to a close, even by purchasing peace if necessary.

In respect to Morocco, Tunis, and Algiers the duties

of the commander-in-chief were numerous and exacting. The rulers of those states sympathized with the pasha of Tripoli and secretly aided him. They were always on the point of breaking their treaties with us and had to be continually overawed by a show of force at their capitals. At times their ships had to be watched and their coasts patrolled.

The diplomatic duties of the commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean were quite as important as his naval ones. He was called upon to conduct negotiations for peace, make treaties, and remove and appoint consuls. His correspondence with the American consuls in Barbary was voluminous. The difficulties of his numerous tasks were much increased by the extensiveness of the territory covered by him. The coast of Barbary was more than three thousand miles long. The principal seaport of Morocco, the westernmost state, was Tangier, almost opposite Gibraltar. To the east of Morocco was Algiers, whose capital of the same name was five hundred miles from Tangier. From Algiers to the capital city Tunis was five hundred fifty miles, and from Tunis to Tripoli three hundred seventy miles.

Of the four Barbary States, Algiers and Tunis were by far the most powerful. Their navies were stronger than ours. Algiers had fifteen large ships, sixty gunboats, and one hundred fifty galleys. Tunis had ninety-four large vessels and thirty gunboats. The Moroccan navy contained five vessels, and the Tripolitan eight large ships and a fleet of gunboats. The population of Barbary consisted largely of Moors, Arabs, Berbers, Kabyles, Turks, and Jews. The prevailing religion was Mahometan. The customs and dress were oriental. The streets of the cities were narrow, dark, and dirty.

The architecture of the public buildings was Moorish. Both people and rulers were semicivilized, childish, fanatical, superstitious, and lovers of pomp and show.

Commodore Thomas Truxtun was chosen to command the new squadron that was to be sent to the Mediterranean in 1802 to relieve the old one under Dale; but, owing to a disagreement with the department, he resigned from the navy. His place as commander-in-chief was taken by the officer next below him in rank, Commodore Richard V. Morris. The new commander sprang from excellent New York stock. His father, Lewis Morris, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and one of his uncles was the distinguished statesman and diplomat, Gouverneur Morris. Richard V. entered the navy in 1798 as captain, and rendered satisfactory service during the French War as commander of the "Adams" and of the "New York." His squadron in the Mediterranean consisted of the flag-ship "Chesapeake," 36; "Constellation," 36, Captain Alexander Murray; "John Adams," 28, Captain John Rodgers; "New York," 36, Captain James Barron; "Adams," 28, Captain H. G. Campbell; and "Enterprise," 12, Lieutenant Andrew Sterrett. These vessels sailed from the United States at different times, from February to October, 1802. The "Chesapeake" arrived at Gibraltar with the commodore on board on May twenty-fifth.

The last ship to sail was Rodgers's vessel, the frigate "John Adams." She was placed in commission at Washington on August twenty-fifth, and on the same day Rodgers was ordered to come on from Baltimore and take command of her. The "John Adams" mounted thirty-two guns; twenty-four long 12-pounders on her gun-deck, and two long 9's and six 24-pound car-



ronades on her forecastle and poop-deck. She was constructed at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1799. Her two sides were built by different contractors, one of whom reduced her moulds and thereby caused her to have a deficiency of beam on one side. As a consequence she bore her canvas better and made greater speed on one tack than on the other. Her burden was five hundred forty-four tons, and her complement two hundred twenty men.

Rodgers's sailing orders, which were dated September eighteenth, directed him to proceed from Washington to Hampton Roads; and, having taken in a supply of beef, pork, rice, beans, butter, gunpowder, and other stores, to sail thence with all possible dispatch to join Morris in the Mediterranean. He left the Roads on October twenty-second, and after a quick voyage arrived at Gibraltar on November sixteenth. Soon putting in to Malaga, he found there Captain Murray of the "Constellation," who ordered him to return to Gibraltar for a load of supplies. Having performed this errand, he sailed for Malta with the merchant brig "Boston" under convoy. After seeing the merchantman safely to the neighborhood of Minorca, he proceeded to his destination, where he arrived on January 5, 1803.

At Malta Rodgers found the commodore with the "Chesapeake," "New York," and "Enterprise."<sup>17</sup> The "Adams" had been left at the straits to blockade the Tripolitan cruiser "Meshouda" in Gibraltar and to watch Morocco, whose ruler showed signs of unfriendliness. The "Constellation," which had been expected to join the squadron with a load of supplies, had been

<sup>17</sup> The main sources for the events from January to October, 1803, are R. V. Morris's *Defence of the Conduct of Commodore Morris during his Command in the Mediterranean*, the *Log of the "John Adams,"* the Rodgers Papers, and the Preble Papers.

ordered home by the department. Morris was now ready to execute certain orders, which he had received from Washington in the previous summer, directing him, with the assistance of Ex-consul Cathcart, to negotiate a treaty of peace with the pasha of Tripoli. He was to place his squadron off Tripoli "taking every care [in the words of the secretary of the navy] to make the handsomest and most military display of force and so conducting maneuvers as to excite an impression that in the event of negotiations failing you intend a close and vigorous blockade." He was directed to hold out the olive-branch with one hand, while he displayed the means of defensive operations with the other. It should be noted that his orders related to the making of peace rather than to the waging of war.

Owing to procrastination at Washington, Morris did not receive his instructions in time to carry them out in the summer of 1802. When Rodgers arrived at Malta in the winter of 1803, he was preparing to execute them, notwithstanding that the season of the year was unpropitious. On January thirtieth, he sailed from Malta for Tripoli with the "Chesapeake," "New York," and "John Adams." The "Enterprise" was not available for this expedition as she was under orders for Tunis. Morris had planned to propose terms of peace to the pasha, and, in case they should be rejected, to send a flotilla of armed boats into the harbor in the night-time and burn the cruisers of the enemy. He had chosen Rodgers to command the flotilla. Before the little fleet was clear of Malta a heavy gale from the north and west set in. Placing his ships under storm canvas, Morris decided to weather it out. At times his flagship labored so heavily as to be in imminent danger of foundering. Finally, however, after experiencing

ten days of the worst kind of weather, he abandoned the expedition and returned to Malta.

The commodore now prepared his ships for a voyage to Gibraltar by way of Tunis and Algiers. This movement was later severely censured by the secretary of the navy. In its defense it may be said that not much could be done at Tripoli until spring, the fleet was in need of provisions, the consuls at Tunis and Algiers were urging Morris to pay them a visit, and his orders gave him much discretion as to his operations. Moreover, the department by directing the "Constellation" to return home had caused one of Morris's plans to miscarry, as she had been ordered by him to proceed from Gibraltar to Malta with a load of supplies. Respecting his failure at this time to meet the expectations of the secretary of the navy, he afterwards wrote: "Gentlemen can in their closets plan expeditions at their ease, make winds and seas to suit their purpose, and extend or contract the limits of time and space; but the poor seaman struggling with a tempest on a lee shore must have something to eat."

On February nineteenth, the fleet, together with a captured vessel of the "Enterprise," the polacre "Paulina," weighed anchor at Malta and sailed for Tunis where they arrived three days later. Here an incident took place in which Rodgers as the officer next in rank to the commodore played a part. As a portion of the cargo of the "Paulina" was owned by a Tunisian, the bey of Tunis demanded the restoration of his subject's property, and he entered into a controversy over it with Morris, who, accompanied by Rodgers and Cathcart, went ashore to settle the dispute. At first Morris insisted that the cause of the prize should be tried at Gibraltar, but on the bey's threatening war he agreed that the question of the own-

ership of the cargo might be decided at Tunis. Having obtained one concession, the bey made a fresh demand. Finally the commodore lost his patience, and abruptly closed the contention. Without taking formal leave of the bey, he and his aides made arrangements to return to the fleet. While they were on their way to their boat at the wharf, they were overtaken by one of the bey's agents, who arrested Morris and refused to let him leave the city until he had paid a debt incurred by our consul to Tunis, William Eaton, in behalf of the United States and in prosecution of a plan to set upon the throne of Tripoli the brother of the reigning pasha. This forcible detention was of course a breach of official hospitality and a gross insult to the American flag. In explanation of it, the bey's agent asserted that Eaton had given his word that the debt should be paid on the arrival of the fleet. Eaton emphatically denied that he had made such a promise. Many palavers over this new subject of contention took place. Finally Morris agreed to pay and the bey agreed to accept twenty-two thousand dollars, about two-thirds of the whole claim; and the commodore was permitted to return to his ship. Cathcart and Rodgers remained a few days longer on shore to complete the settlement of the difficulty. As Eaton was at swords' points with the bey he also embarked, and Morris appointed Dr. George Davis of the navy to act as consul. This disgraceful episode came to an end on March tenth with the sailing of the squadron for Algiers. Morris always blamed Eaton with enticing him on shore and thus causing the indignity that he suffered, but it must be said that he has not proved his charges against the consul.

On March nineteenth, the fleet arrived at Algiers, and on the next day the American consul, Richard O'Brien,

visited the flag-ship and poured into the commodore's ear a tale of woe respecting the refractory ruler to whose court he was accredited. The dey had a grievance against President Jefferson, who had sent him thirty thousand dollars in money instead of naval stores to that value, which had been expected. The disappointed ruler refused either to accept the money or to permit it to be returned to the donor. He now further exhibited his displeasure by declining to receive Cathcart, who had been appointed to succeed O'Brien as consul. Admonished by his experiences ashore at Tunis, Morris did not leave his ship. After a brief stay he sailed for Gibraltar, where he arrived on March twenty-third.

Here he made several important changes in the fleet. He shifted his broad pennant to the "New York," of which vessel Lieutenant Isaac Chauncey became acting captain. The "Chesapeake," Captain James Barron, was sent home in accordance with orders from the department; and the "Enterprise" was placed under the command of Lieutenant Isaac Hull. As soon as the ships had taken on board a supply of provisions they sailed for Malta, the "Adams" proceeding by way of Leghorn with a convoy. On her voyage up the Mediterranean the "New York" had fourteen men killed and five wounded by an explosion of gunpowder. The ship was set on fire and for a time her complete destruction was threatened, but by the heroic exertions of Captain Isaac Chauncey and Lieutenant David Porter she was saved.

When, on May first, the "New York," "Enterprise," and "John Adams" arrived at Malta, only the latter ship was ready for immediate service. On May third, Rodgers received orders to proceed with the "John Adams" to Tripoli and cruise off that port for three weeks, or

until the pasha should make an offer of peace. When he arrived on his station he boldly approached within three-quarters of a mile of the city and for some time received and returned the fire of the gunboats and batteries. For several days he cruised off Tripoli, seeing only neutral vessels, several of which he chased and boarded. On the twelfth, however, he was fortunate enough to fall in with the Tripolitan cruiser, "Meshouda," of twenty guns, which he captured. For two years she had been blockaded at Gibraltar by our cruisers. Desirous of assisting the pasha, the emperor of Morocco laid claim to her, and Morris foolishly allowed his claim. Having thus acquired her liberty, the "Meshouda" obtained a load of naval and military stores, and was entering Tripoli when she was captured. She had on board twenty Tripolitan subjects. Rodgers took his prize to Malta where he arrived on May nineteenth.

Since the "New York" and "Enterprise" were now ready for sea, the "John Adams" sailed in company with them on her return voyage to Tripoli. Commodore Morris was in command of the fleet. On the twenty-second, when he was approaching Tripoli, he discovered several small merchantmen, and he signaled his ships to chase them, which they at once did. Almost immediately several of the enemy's gunboats, which were stationed in the harbor, got under way and came to the rescue of their countrymen. For some time both sides kept up a brisk fire, but in the end the merchantmen escaped to Old Tripoli, a short distance from the main city, and the gunboats returned to the harbor. During the following night, the enemy hauled the merchantmen on shore, and to protect them built some breastworks of stone and bags of wheat. On the next day, the commodore sent the boats of the squadron under the command

of Lieutenant David Porter to destroy the vessels. Facing a hot fire, Porter and his men went ashore, drove the enemy from his breastworks, set fire to his vessels, and regained their boats. Unfortunately the enemy, disregarding the broadsides discharged by the American ships, succeeded in extinguishing the flames before they had done much damage. Porter lost several men and was himself wounded.

Morris's plan was first to frighten the pasha by attacking his gunboats, and then to offer him the olive-branch of peace. On May twenty-sixth, the fleet was reënforced by the "Adams." On the following day the "New York," "John Adams," and "Adams" approached the city, and the gunboats came out to meet them. Rodgers, who was placed in the lead with the "John Adams," bore up, and gaining a position near the enemy opened fire upon him. Unfortunately the "New York" and "Adams" fell in directly behind the "John Adams" and were unable to fire for fear of hitting that vessel. Rodgers continued the engagement until the gunboats retired to their station in the harbor where they were protected by the land batteries. His vessel suffered no losses; the gunboats had several men killed and wounded. On being censured for his disposition of the "New York" and "Adams," Morris defended himself on the ground that his faulty maneuvering resulted from causes beyond his control.

On May twenty-ninth, the commodore, through Nicholas C. Nissen, the Danish consul, opened negotiations with the pasha for a treaty of peace, and a few days later he sent Rodgers ashore to arrange the preliminaries. On June seventh, the commodore disembarked, and on the following day he held an interview with the pasha's trusty minister, Mahamed Dghies. The pasha boldly

declared that he did not fear war, that it was his trade, and that he understood it better than anybody. However, he said, if the United States wished peace, they might have it for two hundred thousand Spanish dollars and the expenses of the war. Morris offered him fifteen thousand dollars—five thousand dollars as a consular present, and ten thousand dollars at the end of five years if the treaty should be faithfully kept. The pasha's reply was an order for the commodore to depart at once, which he did. Morris had faithfully executed the commands of Jefferson, but he had failed to obtain the treaty of peace which the president so much desired.

On May tenth, the commodore sailed for Malta, leaving Rodgers in command of the blockading squadron. After Rodgers had cruised several days off Tripoli without seeing any of the enemy's vessels, the monotony of his duties was broken by a stirring adventure, which he has described in a letter to the secretary of the navy, dated December 4, 1803:

"On the evening of the 21st of June last, owing to some extraordinary movements of the gunboats in the harbor of Tripoli, I was induced to conceive that the pasha either intended to send some cruisers to sea during the night, or that he had received intelligence of some bound in. I therefore accordingly made such disposition of the vessels engaged in the blockade as to enable us to intercept either, by stationing the 'Adams,' Captain Campbell, to the westward; the schooner 'Enterprise,' Lieutenant Hull, to the eastward; and remaining myself with the 'John Adams' abreast of the town. At half past 7 a.m. on the following day, Tripoli bearing W.S.W. distant three or four leagues, observed the 'Enterprise' in the S.S.E. with a signal flying, its signification not distinguishable; made sail and stood towards her;



at 8 a.m. spoke the 'Enterprise,' when Lieutenant Hull informed me that a large ship of the enemy was anchored close in with the beach.

"At half past 8 a.m. shortened sail and prepared to anchor with springs on our cables, discovering that the enemy was anchored with springs on his cables in a deep narrow bay about five or six leagues to the eastward of the town and in a situation very advantageous to the defence of their ship. At the same time observed nine gunboats close in with the shore coming to her assistance, and a vast number of cavalry and armed men on the beach. At seven minutes before 9 a.m., being in seven fathoms' water and supposing we were within point-blank shot, commenced firing, which the enemy returned; and a constant fire was maintained on both sides for forty-five minutes, when the enemy's fire was silenced, at which instant the crew abandoned the ship in the most confused and precipitate manner, such as her boats could not carry leaping overboard. At this moment, being in a quarter less than five fathoms' water and the rocks appearing under our bottom and in every direction around us, I thought it prudent to wear and lay the ship's head off shore; and in the mean time ordered Lieutenant Hull to stand as close in as consisted with safety and amuse the enemy on the beach until our boats could be hoisted out to take possession.

"At a quarter before 10 a.m., discovering one of the enemy's boats returning to the ship whilst in the act of hoisting out ours, tacked and renewed our fire and in a few minutes after had the satisfaction to see the enemy's colors hauled down, at the same time firing both their broadsides which were accompanied by the ship's blowing up with a tremendous explosion, which burst the hull to pieces and forced the main and mizzen masts one

hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty feet perpendicularly into the air, with all the yards, shrouds, stays, etc., belonging to them. This ship was polacre rigged, mounting 22 guns, and the largest cruiser belonging to Tripoli, to appearance a very fine vessel; and from the number of persons we saw abandon her, her crew must have consisted of upwards of two hundred men. All the men who returned to the ship were blown up in her, and I have reason to believe her captain among the number, as well as many lives lost before they abandoned her, as we saw several shot holes through her. Immediately after the ship blew up, I ordered the signal made to chase the gunboats, but was not able to approach them within gunshot owing to the water being very shoal a great distance seaward of them.”<sup>18</sup>

Soon after this event Rodgers received orders to raise the blockade and proceed to Malta, which he did, arriving in port on June twenty-eighth. Commodore Morris had now decided to abandon his operations against Tripoli and to return to Gibraltar with his fleet by way of Messina, Naples, and Leghorn. To say the least, this movement was injudicious. Morris defended it on the ground that his heavy ships could accomplish nothing more at Tripoli, that there was a possibility of obtaining some light draft vessels at Messina or Naples, that the fleet was needed in the straits to oppose Morocco, that it was dangerous to separate his ships, and that the “Adams” must be sent home. The commodore was evidently confused by a multiplicity of objects. He was basing his actions too much upon probabilities. The war with Tripoli was an actuality, and his ships could have continued the blockade with advantage.

<sup>18</sup> Goldsborough, C. W. *The United States Naval Chronicle* (Washington, 1824), 208-209.

On July eleventh, the whole fleet together with the prize "Meshouda" sailed for Messina, where it arrived three days later. Here Morris tried to obtain the loan of some gunboats, and was referred to Sir John Acton, the chief minister of the King of the Two Sicilies, residing at Naples, to which port the fleet next proceeded. Sir John conditionally promised Morris ten gunboats and two bomb ketches for use against Tripoli in the following spring. The fleet left Naples on August third and ten days later arrived at Leghorn, where the ships were separated. The "Enterprise" was sent to Malta for dispatches, the "Adams" to Tunis with Consul Cathcart, and the "John Adams" to Gibraltar with a convoy.

Rodgers left Leghorn with five merchantmen under his protection on the twenty-fourth of August, and, after calling at Barcelona and Alicant, arrived at Malaga on September eleventh. Here he found the commodore who had recently come from Leghorn with the "New York," and also Lieutenant Richard Somers in the schooner "Nautilus" lately from America. Somers brought dispatches from the government, which contained the surprising intelligence that Morris was suspended from his command and Rodgers was appointed to succeed him. "We have been for some time much disappointed with the conduct of Captain Morris," Secretary Smith wrote to the new commander-in-chief. "He has not done anything which he ought to have done, and despairing of his doing anything and also as a mark of our disapprobation, it has been determined to suspend him. We, besides, can obtain from him no information what he is proposing to do. We have generally to rely upon others with respect to his movements."

On September fourteenth, Rodgers and Morris anchored at Gibraltar, where they found Commodore Ed-

ward Preble who had recently come from America with a new squadron, bringing orders for all the vessels of the old squadron, with the exception of the "Enterprise," to return home. Morris sailed for Washington with the "Adams" on September twenty-fifth. Rodgers would have soon followed him with the "New York" and "John Adams" had not a cause arisen for delaying his departure.

For some time the emperor of Morocco had been menacing our commerce, and recently his cruisers had begun to prey upon it. In August one of his ships, the "Mirboka," 22, after capturing an American brig, was taken by the frigate "Philadelphia," Captain William Bainbridge. Under these circumstances Rodgers made preparations to communicate with the emperor and ascertain whether he preferred peace or war. Preble also had determined to bring the emperor to terms. After a consultation the two commodores decided to combine their efforts; and Rodgers, although the senior officer and somewhat hurt at the sight of the broad pennant of his junior flying in the same harbor with his own, agreed to give Preble the precedence. On September seventeenth, the commodores visited Tangier with a view to entering into communication with the emperor. Pending his arrival there, some six or seven of our vessels blockaded the principal ports of Morocco. Rodgers made an extensive cruise on the west coast, and Preble returned to Gibraltar.

Early in October, anticipating the coming of the emperor, Preble and Rodgers returned to Tangier and moored their fleet in battle array, three hundred yards from the shore. The decks were cleared for action, and the crews slept at their quarters. The emperor arrived on October sixth. Although he had an army of twenty

thousand men in the town and his shore batteries mounted one hundred five cannon, he was disposed to seek peace, being cowed by the sight of the American ships drawn up under his guns. As a token of his friendly mood, he sent the commodores a present of cattle, sheep, and fowl. He readily agreed to give up the prisoners and property that had been captured by his ships, and to reaffirm the treaty of 1786 which his father had made with the United States. On their part the commodores agreed to surrender the "Meshouda" and "Mirboka." Within less than a month, by a proper show of force, Preble and Rodgers had obtained an honorable treaty with Morocco without the payment of a cent for tribute or presents. James Simpson, the American consul at Tangier, and Tobias Lear, who had been recently appointed consul-general to Algiers, assisted them in the negotiations.

As soon as our affairs with Morocco were settled, Rodgers prepared the "New York," which was now his flag-ship, and the "John Adams," Captain H. G. Campbell, for their return voyage. He sailed from Gibraltar on October eighteenth and arrived at Washington on December 2, 1803. The news of the peace with the emperor which he brought was highly pleasing to President Jefferson, who on December fifth informed Congress in a message of the amicable adjustment of all our differences with Morocco. He said that the conduct of our officers merited entire approbation, and he referred to the promptitude and energy of Commodore Preble and to the efficacious coöperation of Captains Rodgers and Campbell. He also called attention to the gallant enterprise of Captain Rodgers in destroying on the coast of Tripoli a corvette of that power of twenty-two guns; and he recommended that Congress indemnify the cap-

tors of the "Meshouda" and "Mirboka." Accordingly a law was passed appropriating to the captors a sum of money equal to one-half the value of the two vessels.

Rodgers had been absent from the United States more than thirteen months, from October, 1802 to December 1803. He had distinguished himself in the two principal achievements of that period in the Mediterranean, the blockading of Tripoli and the establishment of peace with Morocco, although on both theaters of action he was second in authority. In conducting the blockade he played a more important part than did his senior, Commodore Morris, and in bringing the emperor of Morocco to terms he shared the honors with Commodore Preble. In succeeding Morris as commander-in-chief, Rodgers for the first time obtained the command of a squadron and received the title of commodore, an honor that came to him at the age of thirty. During his absence from the United States, Rodgers gained three numbers on the captains' list by reason of the retirement of McNeill, the resignation of Dale late in 1802, and the death of Barry, the senior officer of the navy, in September, 1803. Barry's successor as senior officer was Commodore Samuel Nicholson.

When Commodore Morris arrived in the United States in the fall of 1803, he was haled before a court of enquiry, composed of two junior captains and a lieutenant. It reported that the commodore had not conducted himself in his command of the Mediterranean squadron "with the diligence or activity necessary to execute the important duties of his station." The next regular step in naval procedure would have been the convening of a court martial to try him. Jefferson, however, in May, 1804, arbitrarily dismissed Morris from the navy, without a trial. The punishment received by this unfortun-

ate officer was certainly in excess of his offense. By the dismissal of Morris, Rodgers gained another number on the captains' list. Only three officers, Commodores Nicholson, Murray, and Samuel Barron, were above him in rank.

Not many days elapsed after Rodgers's arrival in America before he paid a visit to Sion Hill. For a time Miss Denison was proof against all his ardor and devotion. He made a confidante of Miss Pinkney, a maiden sister of William Pinkney. "She was a great admirer of Captain Rodgers," wrote Mrs. Rodgers many years afterward, "and came up to make a visit at Sion Hill. She spoke of him to me and of his great regard for me and tried to get from me some expression of feeling in regard to him. However, I told her that Captain Rodgers was not sufficiently known to me to warrant the expression of any feeling for him, and that I was too young to think of marrying any one." Finally the captain gained by siege what he failed to conquer by attack. "His devoted affection won my heart," Mrs. Rodgers wrote, "for as he declared to me, he had in his wanderings encountered many fair and beautiful women, but not one of them had caused him for a moment to forget the woman who had enslaved his heart. We became engaged and should have been married in the fall of 1804 had he not been suddenly ordered to sea."





## VI. THE SECOND CRUISE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: 1804-1805

COMMODORE PREBLE sailed from Gibraltar for Malta soon after Rodgers left the Mediterranean station in October, 1803. In September he had sent the "Philadelphia," Captain William Bainbridge, and the "Vixen," Lieutenant John Smith, up the Mediterranean to blockade Tripoli. On October thirty-first while pursuing a Tripolitan cruiser, Bainbridge ran the "Philadelphia" on to some hidden rocks, four or five miles to the eastward of the pasha's capital. He made strenuous efforts to float his vessel, but without success, and he was compelled to surrender her to the enemy. Aided by a heavy northwest wind that raised the level of the water, the captors of the "Philadelphia" soon floated their prize and brought her into port. Three hundred seven American officers and seamen were thus made prisoners. The officers were for the most part not badly treated. At first the seamen were closely confined in prison; but later they were set to hard work, and were often stoned and flogged through the streets of Tripoli like beasts of burden. The possession of these Americans by the pasha, who on occasion threatened to kill them if the commander-in-chief of our squadron did not respect his wishes, greatly strengthened his position.

Commodore Preble arrived at Malta on November 27, 1803. During the ensuing winter and spring he was engaged in maintaining the blockade, in watching the discontented rulers of Tunis and Algiers, and in pre-

paring to attack Tripoli. The most notable event of the winter was the burning of the "Philadelphia," in the night-time, in the harbor of Tripoli by the ketch "Intrepid," Lieutenant Stephen Decatur. For this gallant exploit the young lieutenant received a captaincy from the president and a sword from Congress. By the latter part of July, Preble was ready to begin the reduction of the capital. His fleet consisted of his flagship "Constitution," six small brigs and schooners, and six gunboats and two bomb ketches which he had borrowed from the King of the Two Sicilies. Several times in August and the early part of September he attacked the enemy's gunboats and land defenses, and inflicted much damage upon them. In these operations he had fifty men killed and wounded; the loss of the pasha was doubtless greater. Among the American officers who were killed were Captain Richard Somers, Lieutenants Henry Wadsworth (an uncle of the poet Longfellow), James Decatur, James R. Caldwell, and Joseph Israel—the first commissioned officers of the navy under the Constitution to die for their country. The pasha offered to make peace for one hundred thousand dollars but the commodore spurned his offer. While in the midst of these promising operations, Preble was succeeded by a new commander-in-chief, who arrived before Tripoli on September 10, 1804. In December, Preble sailed for America, receiving the congratulations of his officers and friends on his brilliant service.

The capture of the "Philadelphia" and the imprisonment of her officers and crew thoroughly aroused the president, who now for the first time manifested a lively interest in the prosecution of the war. He decided to increase considerably the naval forces in the Mediter-

anean. Early in April five frigates, which had been laid up in ordinary in the Eastern Branch of the Potomac at Washington, were placed in commission. These vessels were the "President," 44, the flag-ship of the new squadron, Commodore Samuel Barron; "Congress," 36, Captain John Rodgers; "Essex," 32, Captain James Barron; "Constellation," 36, Captain H. G. Campbell; and the "John Adams," 28, Acting Captain Isaac Chauncey. The new commander-in-chief, Commodore Samuel Barron, was a member of the distinguished Virginian naval family of Barrons. When a mere youth he served in the Revolutionary War under his father, James Barron Sr., the commodore of the Virginia navy. In 1798, he entered the federal navy as captain, and in the conflict with France commanded successively the "Richmond," the "Constellation," and the "Chesapeake."

Rodgers's call to sea duty found him in Washington where he had been employed since January, 1804, in superintending the construction of a gunboat, the very first vessel of Jefferson's famous flotilla. In July of that year "Gunboat No. 1," being completed and ready for sea, sailed for Charleston, South Carolina, where, soon after her arrival, her seagoing career was interrupted by a severe storm which drove her from her moorings and left her high and dry in a cornfield. During the spring, anticipating his return to the Mediterranean, Rodgers extended his knowledge of the classic lands of antiquity by reading Virgil, "Herculaneum," and doubtless similar works. He also found time to procure a midshipman's warrant for his youngest brother, George Washington Rodgers, now a lad of seventeen years. Nor was he too busy to participate in the social diversions of the rural capital, attending on one occasion a ball that was

given by his friend, Captain Thomas Tingey, and other leaders of polite society at the seat of government.

His new command, the frigate "Congress," was about the size of the "Insurgente." She was built at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, during the French War, costing some two hundred thousand dollars. Her burden was twelve hundred sixty-eight tons, and her complement three hundred forty men. During April and May, 1804, Rodgers was equipping her in Washington, and about the first of June he dropped down to Hampton Roads. He was pleased with neither the crew nor the equipment of his vessel, both of which had been hastily supplied. At the Roads he discharged several men, "miserable, useless, unsound wretches," he called them, "perfectly unqualified for any service." He had his gunner, "an infamous scoundrel," court-martialed. To a responsible employee of the Washington yard who had failed to equip the "Congress" with certain necessary articles, after having promised faithfully to do so, the irate captain wrote: "It is your interest to pray that my head may be knocked off before I return, for be assured if you are not punished before that period I will revenge the injury you have done me with my own hands."

The "John Adams" sailed from Hampton Roads on June twenty-sixth; and the four remaining vessels, under the immediate command of Commodore Barron, on July fifth. For the first two weeks of Barron's passage the weather was favorable, but for the last twenty-five days the winds were ahead and the sailing very tedious. To facilitate the movement of the fleet, the commodore on August seventh ordered each captain to make his way to Gibraltar as best he could, independent of the other ships. Rodgers, who reached Gibraltar on August

twelfth, was the first to arrive in port. Later on the same day the "President" and "Constellation" came in, and on the following day the "Essex." Suspecting that the emperor of Morocco was contemplating hostilities, Barron ordered Rodgers to take the "Congress" and "Essex" and ascertain the intentions of that fickle ruler. The commodore with the other two vessels proceeded up the Mediterranean, and on September tenth, arrived off Tripoli and relieved Preble as commander of the blockading squadron.

On August fifteenth, Rodgers sailed from Gibraltar to Tangier with the "Congress" and "Essex." After communicating with the American consul, he ordered the "Essex," Captain James Barron, to watch the movements of two of the emperor's galleys then in Tangier Bay, while he proceeded in the "Congress" down the west coast on a cruise of observation. He visited the western ports of Morocco as far south as Salle, but discovered no signs of hostility. As the emperor appeared to be in a friendly mood, Rodgers returned to Gibraltar. He deemed it prudent, however, to order the "Essex" to remain in the straits and guard our interests in that quarter. With the "Congress" he proceeded up the Mediterranean to join Commodore Barron, being anxious (as he said) that his vessel should share the credit to be derived from the reduction of Tripoli by inscribing a lasting and honorable remembrance of her name on its walls. Calling at Algiers, he received on board the "Congress" his friend, Colonel Tobias Lear, who was now consul-general to Algiers and was charged by his government with conducting negotiations for peace with the pasha of Tripoli. After landing Lear at Malta, Rodgers joined the blockading squadron.

Soon after Commodore Barron arrived off Tripoli

he was attacked by an extreme illness, caused by a disease of the liver. Hoping to improve his health, he now gave Rodgers the command of the blockading squadron and returned to Malta. Rodgers remained on the coast a little more than a month, during which time he was engaged in active cruising. The only vessels of the enemy that he saw were four small coasting boats, which effected their escape by reason of light winds and hazy weather. "Two of these boats," he wrote, "I chased on shore, one about three and the other five miles to the westward of the town; and sent three boats in to bring one of them off, anchoring at the same time within the reach of grape of the shore, conceiving I should be able to cover the boats so effectually as to enable them to execute my orders without much opposition. But being so near the town and in sight of an Arabian camp, before they could reach the shore the enemy collected in such numbers as to make the thing impracticable without the greatest probability of making sacrifices or at least hazarding more than the emergency of such an acquisition would justify. The enemy were covered by the rocks in a manner to prevent my annoying them much by the fire from the ship. To the officers (Lieutenants Wyer, Henley, and Blakely commanding the boats) and men engaged in this service, it is but justice in me to observe that they would have effected the execution of my orders, I have not the least doubt, in spite of all opposition, had I not been induced, through motives of regard of the consequences of hazarding the lives of so many men to effect an object of so little importance to their country, to countermand my orders by signal after they had reached the enemy within pistol shot."

This incident is characteristic of Rodgers's great care

and regard for his men. Throughout his naval career he showed an unwillingness to hazard their lives unless the chances of success warranted it. On the other hand he was remarkably reckless of his own life when there existed the merest possibility of attaining a worthy object. Several incidents exhibiting his fearlessness and personal daring have already been narrated—the facing of a mob in Liverpool, the cowing of the mutinous crew of the “Insurgente,” and the saving of life and property at Cape Francois. An incident of a somewhat similar character occurred on the blockade, and may be told in Rodgers’s words:

“Conceiving it an object of no small importance to know to certainty to what distance our ships can approach the batteries of Tripoli with safety, I had resolved for some time past on sounding, the first favorable opportunity for this purpose. And on Friday night, 19th instant, I made the attempt and succeeded without interruption much to my satisfaction. It being between one and two o’clock in the morning when I went in and every thing quiet, I was enabled to approach so near as to observe the position of the cruisers, and found that all the gunboats were hauled up with their sterns foremost on the beach so as to enable them to act as a battery, and the ketch, schooner, brig, and two galleys dismantled and moored to the walls. The brig has no masts in. I am now sufficiently acquainted with the coast contiguous to the batteries to consider myself a good pilot. And this has proved to me, in service like this, the necessity of every man of war having a gig, as the sounding of an enemy’s coast can be effected in one of these boats without risk, when it cannot be done in any other way with safety. I was in four feet of water, unperceived,

altho I could hear the people on shore distinctly in common conversation."

Towards the latter part of October, Rodgers sailed for Malta to obtain water and to repair his ship. On his way to port he captured a small xebec, mounting two carriage guns and several howitzers, and carrying nine Turks. She had neither colors nor a scrap of paper of any kind showing her nationality. Her crew said that she was a prize to a Tunisian cruiser, but Rodgers was inclined to believe that she was a Tripolitan vessel and that her papers had been destroyed to conceal her identity. He therefore took her into Malta for examination.

On November first, Commodore Preble delivered to Rodgers by order of Commodore Barron the frigate "Constitution," and a few days later the flag of her new commander was hoisted on board her. She was Rodgers's first forty-four, and for several years was his sea-home. This famous frigate was built at Boston in 1794-1797, after models furnished by Jonathan Humphreys, the skilful architect of our early naval ships. He is said to have drawn many of his ideas of ship-building from the French practice. The distinguishing feature of his vessels was their excess in size and armament over vessels of the same class in foreign navies. The lines of the "Constitution" were remarkably fine, and her beauty elicited the admiration of all observers. She mounted twenty-eight long 24's on her gun-deck, and six 24's and ten 12's on her upper deck. Her length on the load water-line was 175 feet and her breadth of beam 43.6 feet. Her draft was 22 feet, and her tonnage 1576 tons. Her tanks held 48,600 gallons of water, and her hold stowed six months' provisions. She carried 22 commissioned and warrant officers and 378 petty



officers, seamen, and marines— 400 men in all. Sailing free under topgallant-sails, her speed was 13.5 knots.

From Malta, Rodgers proceeded to Syracuse, where our fleet had a depot of supplies and a naval hospital. Here he found Commodore Barron, who was still sick. "I am so unwell today," Barron said on November third, "that I can scarcely write at all and am unfit for business. God knows how it will end!" Ten days later he made Rodgers acting commander-in-chief of the squadron, writing to him as follows: "As I shall not be able to attend to the business afloat for some time, I request you will hoist the broad pennant on board the 'Constitution' and give such orders for the safety of the squadron from time to time as may be most proper." By the latter part of the month Barron's health had improved, and since not much could be done on the blockade during the winter he decided to send Rodgers to Lisbon for seamen, where it was understood they were plentiful. Rodgers was to call at Tangier on his way through the straits, and, in case he found the emperor peacefully disposed towards us, he was to order the "Siren," which was now guarding our interests in that quarter, to join the commodore.

He left Syracuse on November twenty-ninth and arrived at Gibraltar on December eighteenth. Owing to an epidemic of yellow fever, he did not go ashore, but proceeded at once to Tangier where he was pleased to learn that our relations with the emperor were quite satisfactory. On the way to Lisbon he encountered a heavy westerly gale which drove him off his course, and for a time compelled him to carry a heavy press of sail to avoid being cast away on the coast of Morocco. On December twenty-eighth, he reached Lisbon, with his bowsprit badly strained and his sails much dam-

aged. Here he was delayed several weeks under circumstances that greatly tried his temper. Several days elapsed before he could obtain pratique, and on reaching the city serious difficulties arose over the enlistment of seamen. For many of the inconveniences that he suffered, Rodgers blamed the American consul, William Jarvis, with whom he had a serious altercation. He threatened the consul with chastisement; and accused him of neglecting the interests of his government, of interference with the enlistment of seamen, and of "contemptible, ungentlemanly conduct."

One of the disputes between the two men had its origin in the enlistment of some Danish deserters by the officers of the "Constitution." On a complaint being made by the Danish consul, Rodgers dismissed the men from his ship. This method of procedure displeased Jarvis, who contended that the men should have been delivered to the captains from whose ships they had deserted. Jarvis's contention aroused the indignation of Rodgers, who in a letter to the consul expressed his convictions as follows: "I cannot conceive that I am bound either by national or personal honor to deliver men into the hands of an authority that would punish them for their wishing to serve our country in preference to their own, particularly when at the same time I had no election in the motive that influenced their conduct. No sir, I must be permitted to tell you that I conceive such a proceeding would be contrary both to liberality and propriety, as it would at once be sacrificing one of the essential advantages which by the properties of our soil and the purity of our blessed Constitution we derive over all other nations. And it does not a little astonish me that you as the only representative of the government of the United States

in this port should wish to furnish the means of punishing your fellow-beings for preferring Freedom to Slavery."

After enlisting all the recruits that could be obtained at Lisbon, Rodgers sailed for Gibraltar, where he arrived on February 14, 1805. Since some recent movements of the emperor's cruisers looked suspicious, he ordered the commander of the "Siren" to remain in the straits. His stay in port was very brief, as he was exceedingly desirous to regain his commodore. "I can scarcely describe the anxiety which I feel for the approach of summer," he wrote at this time to the secretary of the navy, "as I am satisfied that if we do our duty we shall reduce Tripoli in a manner that will be particularly advantageous and highly honorable to our country." The "Constitution" arrived at Malta on February twenty-fifth.

Since the spring of 1805 constitutes an important period of the Tripolitan War, it may be well to obtain a general view of the distribution of the ships of the squadron at that time. Barron's fleet in commission consisted of five frigates and seven small sailing craft. The "Siren" (Stewart) was stationed in the straits. The eleven remaining vessels were engaged chiefly in three enterprises, the most important of which was the blockading of the capital and coast of Tripoli. Four vessels were wholly employed on this duty: the frigates "Constitution" (Rodgers), "President" (Cox), and "Constellation" (Campbell), and the schooner "Vixen" (Smith). During the early spring three other ships were also thus employed: the frigates "Congress" (Decatur) and "Essex" (J. Barron) and the schooner "Nautilus" (Dent). A second enterprise was the obtaining of naval materials of various kinds

from Italian and Austrian ports, which work fell to the two frigates "Essex" and "Congress" and the schooner "Enterprise" (Robinson). The schooners "Argus" (Hull) and "Nautilus" (Dent) and the sloop "Hornet" (Evans) found employment in a third undertaking. This requires some explanation.

As a passenger on board the "President" with Commodore Barron, there returned to the Mediterranean in the summer of 1804 William Eaton, formerly a captain in the United States army, later consul to Tunis, and now navy agent to the Barbary regencies. This erratic genius was authorized by Jefferson to undertake an expedition designed to place upon the throne of Tripoli Hamet Karamanli, an older brother of the reigning pasha, and by descent the rightful ruler of the nation. Hamet, it was said, was willing to make a most favorable treaty of peace with us, and his friends and allies would aid us in reducing the pasha's capital. The first step in this ambitious undertaking was to find Hamet, who had sought refuge in Egypt. In November, 1804, Eaton was conveyed to Alexandria by Lieutenant Isaac Hull in the "Argus." He finally found the refugee some hundreds of miles up the Nile among the Mamelukes, and returned with him to the coast. Forty miles to the westward of Alexandria Eaton collected an "army", consisting of about four hundred men, one hundred and five camels, a few asses, and a quantity of military stores. It contained ten Americans: General William Eaton, commander-in-chief, Lieutenant P. N. O'Bannon of the marine corps, Midshipmen P. P. Peck, one noncommissioned officer, and six marines. In Eaton's motley troop there were twenty-five cannoneers of various nationalities, with three officers; thirty-eight Greeks, with two officers; Hamet and

his suite of about ninety men; a party of Arabian cavalry; and several footmen and camel-drivers.

On March 8, 1805, the army began its march across the Libyan desert to the port of Derne, distant some six hundred miles. This town, the second largest in Tripoli, was the capital of an extensive province. All the genius, resource, and valor of the general were needed to bring to a successful conclusion his daring venture. After encountering many obstacles and undergoing great privations and dangers, he brought his army, now reënforced by a rabble of Arabs, before Derne, which place, with the aid of the "Argus," "Nautilus," and "Hornet," he captured on April twenty-seventh. Here for several days his position was exceedingly precarious. He succeeded however, in defeating the forces of the pasha that were sent against him, and in strengthening his army; and he felt confident that by the aid of the fleet he could continue his march westward to the capital, some seven hundred miles distant, and capture it. His plans, however, seem chimerical in view of the long march across the desert, the exhaustion of his resources, the timidity and irresolution of Hamet, and the poverty and small number of the exiled pasha's followers. It is not clear how Eaton could do more than hold Derne.

Rodgers had nothing whatever to do with Eaton's daring exploit. He spent almost the whole of the spring of 1805 before Tripoli in command of the blockading squadron. Once in March he made a brief visit to Malta to see the commodore who was still sick. When the weather was fine he frequently reconnoitered the harbor in quest of information respecting the enemy's forces. On the twenty-fourth of April, some five miles from Tripoli, he fell in with and captured a pri-

vateer of eight guns, accompanied with two Neapolitan prizes, and bound directly into port. The captured vessels were sent to Malta in charge of the "President," Captain George Cox.

Several times during the spring, Rodgers communicated with Bainbridge, sending him letters and clothing for himself and men. Since all correspondence was censured by the Tripolitan officials, Rodgers was unable to write as freely as he wished, but he succeeded in hinting to the unfortunate captain that the prospects of his release were bright. "Chance has placed you in a situation which requires patience and fortitude to withstand," he wrote. "Fortitude I know you possess, and patience you must summon to her aid a little longer. The officers of every denomination in the squadron participate in your sufferings; every nerve will be exerted in your behalf, and every face will beam with pleasure the day that fate shall decree you and your fellow sufferers free men. Patience! Pray make my regards to Messers. Porter and Renshaw, and be pleased to inform Mr. Renshaw that his friends in Philadelphia are well, as also those of Mr. Gibbon in Washington and Virginia. I have sent two trunks containing wearing apparel, one for Dr. Ridgely and Mr. Harwood, and the other for Mr. Gibbon, which were sent out from Washington in the 'Congress'."

As Commodore Barron remained sick at Malta throughout the spring, his arrangements for the blockade and the proposed attack on Tripoli were not made with the energy or vigor that he otherwise would have shown. In March, Rodgers outlined a plan for conducting the blockade, intercepting the enemy's cruisers, and providing an auxiliary force for offensive operations, which he sent to Barron. "I would not have

ventured to have given an opinion unasked for, thus freely," he wrote, "was it not with an intention of alleviating the anxiety which you must naturally feel in consequence of your being debarred from using those exertions which your capacity would enforce were you in health." Rodgers believed that the attack on Tripoli should be made before the first of June. April went by and then the first part of May, without a sign from the commodore that he planned to make an immediate movement. These were anxious days for Rodgers. On April seventeenth, he forcibly expressed his views thus in a letter to Lear: "I do not believe that he [the pasha] will accede to what you will consider equal terms, until he is made more sensible of our force and demonstratively convinced of our capacity to use it. . . I feel more than ever confident our present force, with an addition of two mortars and two gunboats, will enable us to give you the opportunity of negotiating a peace perfectly to your wishes. If the attack is made within six weeks, under proper regulations, I will pledge all that's sacred and dear to me that we succeed in the most perfect, handsome and honorable manner."

At this time Commodore Barron and Colonel Lear agreed with Rodgers that Tripoli should be attacked before negotiations for peace were begun, a view that was in accordance with a sound military judgment. A more favorable treaty could certainly be negotiated after the pasha had seen the American squadron drawn up in battle array before his capital and had felt the full force of the argument that its guns were capable of making. Moreover, the American government expected Barron to reduce Tripoli, and was preparing to send him a fleet of gunboats. Since the fall of 1804, he had been waiting for the coming of spring when

favorable weather would permit offensive operations.

On one of the last days of April one of the vessels of the squadron arrived at Malta bringing direct overtures for peace from the pasha. The choice of refusing or accepting them lay with Commodore Barron. Lear's orders were to negotiate a treaty when in the opinion of the commander-in-chief the time for making peace had arrived. Barron wisely declined to accept the overtures. His views on May first may be obtained from a letter that he wrote to Rodgers on that date: "My health, I am happy to say, has greatly improved within a few days. My strength begins to return and I have sanguine hopes that I shall be able to appear personally before Tripoli as soon as the season is sufficiently advanced for entering upon offensive operations." It is thus seen that on May first the commodore intended to attack Tripoli. The outlook for the success of the American arms was highly favorable, even more favorable than Barron at the time had reason to expect, for he did not then know that Eaton was in possession of Derne and that the government at Washington was sending out reënforcements.

The following sentences extracted from a letter of Lear to Rodgers show the peace commissioner's views at that time: "I have received by the ketch a letter from the Spanish consul written by the express desire of the pasha, saying that he proposed as the ground work of a negotiation that we should pay him two hundred thousand dollars for peace and ransom and give up all his subjects in our hands gratis with all their property. This is the first direct overture which has been officially made, and altho much less extravagant than I should have expected, yet is totally inadmissi-



ble. . . The ground work must however be very different from this before I can think of raising a superstruc-tion. . . I see no prospect of all our force being concentrated and ready to act against Tripoli before the beginning or middle of June, so that I must regret that you will not have your just and sanguine wishes accomplished of seeing us ready to make an attack before that time."

A few days later Commodore Barron's plans underwent a complete change. By May eighteenth he had decided to relinquish the command of the squadron to Rodgers, to abandon the attack on Tripoli, and to accept the pasha's overtures for peace which he had recently rejected. Why the commodore had suddenly reached conclusions so widely different from his former ones is an interesting question. In the first place, the expected improvement of his health had not been effected, and he was therefore constrained to surrender the command of the squadron to Rodgers. His interest in offensive operations, since they were not to be directed by himself, naturally declined. The reasons for the abandonment of his plans that he gave doubtless had much weight with him: his application to the Neapolitan and Venetian governments for the loan of some bombards and gunboats had resulted in disappointment and failure, and such craft were "essential to ensure the complete success of offensive operations;" several vessels must be sent home, since the term of enlistment of their crews would soon expire; the weakness of Hamet and his cause did not warrant further coöperation with him; the capture of Derne would lead the pasha to moderate his pretensions and to accept a peace honorable to the United States; and no oppor-

tunity to release Bainbridge and his men that promised success should be lost.

The commodore was probably assisted in arriving at his conclusions by his brother, Captain James Barron, who reached Malta from Venice and Trieste on May twelfth. Since October, 1804, the captain had greatly aided the commodore in managing the fleet. Rodgers believed that the younger Barron was his enemy, and was intriguing against him. He said that Captain James used "every means which his imagination could invent to induce the commodore not to give up the command," while at the same time he was "assuring me with the gravity of a Judas that he had been endeavoring to prevail on his brother to resign." Lear was accused of exerting an undue influence over the commodore in behalf of peace, but Rodgers emphatically denied the charges made against his friend. It must be said, however, that Lear was not a bellicose man. The choice of peace or war lay with the elder Barron, and he must be held responsible for his official acts. It is true that his health was bad; but his mind, if we may judge from his letters, was clear and sound. Certainly Rodgers had no part in determining the commodore's decision. He was on the blockade before Tripoli, and was daily expecting the arrival of the whole squadron prepared for offensive operations. He declared afterwards that he was always positively of the opinion that a negotiation ought never to have been attempted until "our whole force was drawn up before the enemy's walls."<sup>19</sup>

Commodore Barron's action was precipitate. The sudden withdrawal of his support from General Eaton, with whom he had been coöperating for several months,

<sup>19</sup> Rodgers, Commodore John. *Reply to General William Eaton* (undated).

placed his ally in a most embarrassing position. Nor was it just to Rodgers that the commodore should adopt a wholly new policy at the very moment of his resignation and bind his successor to carry it out. On the other hand, it should be said that had Barron been a well man he would certainly have attacked Tripoli; and that his decision to make peace was not without beneficial results to the United States.

The commodore's letter resigning his command and notifying Rodgers of his determination to begin negotiations for a treaty was dated Malta, May 22, 1805. After referring to his ill health, he said: "To relinquish my command therefore is, I conceive, a duty which I owe to our country and to the service in general, but more particularly to the present squadron—an act of justice which the skill, courage and general merits of the officers and the order and discipline of the crews at once enforce and embitter. For you, Sir, need not be informed that this decision could not be made without a long and painful struggle as well as mature deliberation; but it is made, and accordingly I do hereby resign my command of the naval forces of the United States in these seas, and by this letter communicate officially my resignation to you on whom the command devolves by the law of seniority; reserving to myself however the right of reassuming it in case the war should be protracted beyond my hopes and expectations, and my health be fully restored." He then added: "The pain inseparable from this act of duty is greatly alleviated by two reflections. First that in having you, Sir, for my senior captain I am enabled to resign my station to an officer who already in a high degree enjoys the confidence of our government. And secondly, that previous to my resignation the consul-general has ex-

pressed his coincidence with the opinion which I officially communicated to him respecting the propriety and policy of meeting the recent overture of the pasha of Tripoli so far as to offer a negotiation, for which I am persuaded that the present moment is eminently favorable and of the success of which I entertain sanguine expectations, conducted as it will be by a gentleman of such ability, experience, and moderation as Colonel Lear, with the ready assistance and co-operation which I doubt not he will find in your activity and zeal."

## VII. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON: 1805-1806

ON May 24, 1805, the frigate "Essex," Captain James Barron, with Peace Commissioner Lear as a passenger, sailed from Malta for Tripoli, where she arrived on the twenty-sixth. At ten o'clock in the morning of that day Barron and Lear went aboard the frigate "Constitution" and notified her commander, Captain John Rodgers, that Commodore Samuel Barron had relinquished his office as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean station and had authorized the beginning of negotiations for peace with the pasha. Rodgers at once assumed his new command, with the "Constitution" as his flag-ship. Captain Barron, Lear, and the new commander-in-chief then went aboard the "Essex" and stood towards the town, hoisting a flag of truce, which was answered by a similar flag from the pasha's castle. Soon a boat containing the Spanish consul and an officer of the pasha came off and boarded the "Essex." Negotiations for peace were at once begun. In the initial conferences, the pasha was represented by the Spanish consul; but, on Lear's objecting to him, the Danish consul, Nicholas C. Nissen, a good friend of the Americans, took his place. Humiliated by the successes of the navy and alarmed by the movements of Eaton, the Tripolitan ruler was disposed to end the war. He acknowledged that he was defeated and that the squadron then in the Mediterranean was sufficient to reduce his capital. He declared, however, that should his enemy drive him

to the last extremity he would retire from the capital with the officers and crew of the "Philadelphia" to a castle in the interior of his dominions which he had prepared for them.<sup>20</sup>

On opening the negotiations Lear rejected the pasha's original offer of peace for two hundred thousand dollars. After some time had been spent in discussion and bargaining, the peace commissioner stated his ultimatum, and it was accepted. On June fourth, a treaty of peace and amity between the United States and Tripoli was signed. It provided that the prisoners in the possession of the belligerents should be exchanged man for man, and that for the excess remaining in the hands of the pasha our government should pay sixty thousand dollars. Derne was to be evacuated, and Hamet's family was to be restored to him. The peace established by the treaty was to be on the terms granted by each country to the most favored nations.

While Lear's treaty was an honorable one and was satisfactory to the government at Washington, its stipulation respecting a ransom was justly objected to by the opponents of the administration. It must be remembered, however, that the practice of ransoming prisoners had at this time the sanction of Christendom, and that by the payment of a small sum of money more than three hundred captive Americans were released, and possibly saved from death, since the pasha frequently threatened to kill them. Preble had once offered one hundred thousand dollars for peace. A great advantage was yielded by Commodore Barron when he decided to treat with the pasha before he attacked Tripoli and while the vessels of the squadron were scattered over the Mediterranean. Under all the circumstances

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<sup>20</sup> Rodgers, Commodore John. *Reply to General William Eaton* (undated).

the terms obtained by Lear were as favorable as could be expected. It has been said that his treaty awakened the conscience of Europe. "From the day that it was signed the power of the Barbary corsairs began to wane. The older countries saw their duty more clearly, and ceased to legalize robbery on the high seas. To America the success gave an immediate position which could not easily have been gained in any other way, and, apart from its moral results, the contest with Tripoli was the most potent factor in consolidating the navy of the United States."<sup>21</sup>

The initial conferences were held on board the "Essex"; but on May twenty-ninth the negotiations were moved to Rodgers's flag-ship, the "Constitution," and on June third the preliminary articles were signed on board that vessel. Commodore Rodgers doubtless aided the peace commissioner with his counsel. Although he supported the treaty, he was not wholly satisfied with it. His views and wishes at this time are disclosed by the following words of Lear, written on June third: "This, I believe, is the first instance where peace has been concluded by any of the Barbary states on board a ship of war. I must pay a tribute to Commodore Rodgers, whose conduct during the negotiation on board was mixed with that manly firmness and evident wish to continue the war if it could be done with propriety, while he displayed the magnanimity of an American in declaring that we fought not for conquest but to maintain our just rights and national dignity." Lear then adds, "You will pardon me if I here introduce a circumstance evincive of the spirit of our countrymen. At breakfast this morning Commodore Rodgers observed that, if the pasha would

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<sup>21</sup> Lane-Poole, Stanley. *The Story of the Barbary Corsairs*, 291.

consent to deliver up our countrymen without making peace, he would engage to give him two hundred thousand dollars instead of sixty thousand, and raise the difference between the two sums from the officers of the navy, who, he was perfectly assured, would contribute to it with the highest satisfaction.”<sup>22</sup>

On the evening of June third, Commodore Rodgers and Colonel Lear went ashore to visit the officers of the “Philadelphia” and congratulate them on their liberation. On the next day a symbol of the restoration of peace was displayed at the American consulate (where a little more than four years before the flagstaff had been cut down) by raising a new flagstaff and again hoisting the American flag. Dr. John Ridgely, the surgeon of the “Philadelphia,” was appointed chargé d'affaires. The American prisoners, after a captivity of nineteen months, were released and sent aboard the ships of the squadron. On June sixth, Rodgers sailed to Malta in the “Constitution” to fetch the Tripolitan prisoners and the money due the pasha. He was again at Tripoli on the seventeenth, and three days later he visited the pasha and received his assurances of good-will and friendship. On June twenty-first, accompanied by Lear, the commodore returned to Malta.

A few days before Commodore Barron resigned the command of the Mediterranean squadron, he wrote to General Eaton of his decision to begin negotiations for peace and intimated that Derne would in all probability have to be evacuated. He also ordered the vessels that had been coöperating with Eaton to leave Derne and proceed to Syracuse after giving the general an opportunity to embark his forces. This gallant officer, however, was determined not to abandon the captured town

<sup>22</sup> *American State Papers*, “Foreign Relations,” vol. ii, 718.



and his allies until compelled to do so. On June fifth, Commodore Rodgers, thinking that possibly Eaton might be still at Derne, sent the "Constellation," Captain H. G. Campbell, to inform him of the conclusion of peace and to convey him and his party to Syracuse. Campbell reached Derne on the eleventh, and soon after his arrival received on board his ship Eaton, O'Bannon, and the other Americans of the army, a company of cannoneers, a party of Greeks, and Hamet and his suite of some forty dependants. On June twenty-fifth the "Constellation" arrived at Syracuse. Here Hamet and his followers found quarters ashore. Commodore Rodgers allowed him two hundred Spanish dollars a month for his support. The commodore wished to send him to America, but, being fearful of a sea voyage he declined to go. Hamet received no little sympathy in the States. In April, 1806, Congress voted him twenty-four hundred dollars. Some of the critics of the Republican administration contended that he had been unjustly treated and that his cause had been dishonorably abandoned. In view of the hopelessness of his prospects when Eaton found him among the Mamelukes and the little aid that he rendered in the march to Derne and in the capture of that port, it can not be said that this weak irresolute man fared ill at the hands of the American government.

While the negotiations with Tripoli were being conducted, Rodgers decided that, if they resulted in the concluding of a peace, he would make an expedition to Tunis, with the ruler of which power he had been having trouble. For several weeks during the early summer of 1805 the commodore was at Syracuse and Malta preparing his fleet for a visit to the Tunisian capital. Various other matters also demanded his attention at

this time. The usual disciplinary measures of a fleet in port had to be attended to. A rather important duty that fell to him late in June was the appointing of a court of enquiry to investigate the loss of the "Philadelphia." Its members were Captains James Barron, H. G. Campbell, and Stephen Decatur; and its judge advocate, General William Eaton. Its sessions were held at Syracuse on board the "President." After examining Lieutenant David Porter and several other witnesses, the court decided that Bainbridge had acted with fortitude and good judgment and that he was not censurable for the loss of his ship.

During his stay at Syracuse and Malta, the commodore decided several controversies that had arisen between the commander-in-chief of the squadron and foreign governments over captured vessels. In September, 1804, the "Argus" had taken the ship "St. Miguel." Some of the subjects of the Czar of Russia claimed her as their property, and Rodgers finally agreed to surrender her to the Russian consul at Malta. In the summer of 1805, the Sublime Porte sent a Turkish frigate to Malta to claim the Ottoman ketch "Gheretti" and two Greek polacres, "La Madona" and "Jebra." The ketch had aided the Tripolitan gunboats in capturing the "Philadelphia" when she ran aground in October, 1803. Later she was taken by Preble and named the "Intrepid," and under the command of Decatur she burned the vessel in whose capture she had participated. Finally Preble converted her into a fire-ship and sent her into the harbor of Tripoli to destroy the enemy's gunboats, where she blew up killing Somers, Wadsworth, and Israel. The two polacres were captured by Commodore Barron for a violation of the blockade. Rodgers pacified the Porte by agreeing to give up the

polacres and to refer the case of the "Gheretti" to Washington for adjudication.

Another matter that gave the commodore much anxiety at this time was the trial of Lieutenant C. L. Ridgely, who in January, 1805, was arrested at Messina and charged with killing George Hutchinson, a mate of an English transport. Protesting his innocence, Ridgely gave himself up for trial. A court constituted by the King of the Two Sicilies tried him and found him guiltless, restoring him (as Rodgers said) "spotless to his country and to his friends."

In July, while the commodore was at Malta with his fleet, several British men of war, under the command of Commodore Hammond of the Royal Navy, were anchored in the harbor. The desertion of seamen from one squadron and their enlistment by the other gave the commodores grounds for complaint against each other. Remonstrances and demands for restitution were made on each side. In the end the differences were settled in a manner satisfactory to Rodgers, as may be seen from the following words which he addressed to the secretary of the navy: "After receiving the men which I had demanded, it was stipulated between Commodore Hammond and myself that all deserters from our respective squadrons, impressed Americans excepted, should be given up; he saying at the same time that he did not conceive I was bound to give up men which had entered our service in the United States, whatever might have been their previous situation. This is what the British have never in any one instance acknowledged before." During the Barbary Wars difficulties with the English over seamen were frequent, but they were not always settled as happily as those between Rodgers and Hammond.

About this time the Mediterranean squadron was reinforced. An addition made by Lieutenant Thomas Robinson of the "Enterprise," however, did not greatly strengthen the fleet. He purchased at Alcona, in the Adriatic Sea, six "miserable, defenceless trabaccoloes and lateen boats," which had neither guns nor crews. Eight gunboats arrived at Syracuse from America between the seventh and ninth of July, all within forty-eight hours of each other. "This," Rodgers wrote, "is a very extraordinary circumstance and equally worthy of remark when we consider that they all sailed on different days from all the different principal ports between and including Charleston (S.C.) and Boston (Mass.). In point of effective force and utility they are vastly superior to any thing of the kind I have yet seen, and they sail in all respects uncommonly well." It should be said that a gunboat of the Old Navy was a vessel some sixty feet long and fifteen feet wide, carrying from twenty-five to forty-five men and mounting one or two large guns. A ninth gunboat sailed for the Mediterranean, but was lost at sea. About the first of September two bomb-ketches, the "Vengeance" and "Spitfire," which Preble had purchased in Boston, arrived at Syracuse.

An unfortunate experience of "Gunboat No. 6," Lieutenant James Lawrence, caused Commodore Rodgers to issue an important order to the fleet. When off Cadiz this vessel was boarded by the British ships "Tenedos" and "Dreadnought," part of a squadron under the command of Vice-admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, one of Nelson's commanders. While Lawrence was below with the English officers, three of his men, who had been unruly during the passage, discovering some of their former shipmates on board the visiting

boat, declared themselves English subjects with a view to obtaining their release from the American service. One of them claimed to be a deserter from the British frigate "Flora." The officers, on being told of the declaration of the men, demanded their release, but Lawrence refused to surrender them. Deeming it advisable to state his case to the admiral of the fleet, the young lieutenant, after giving strict orders to his first officer, Midshipman James Roach, not to permit any one to leave the vessel, went on board the British flag-ship "Dreadnought." During his absence another English boat came alongside of the gunboat and the three men jumped into it before Roach could prevent them, and were conveyed to the flag-ship. On learning of the desertion of his men, Lawrence demanded their release, but Collingwood refused to give them up. Lawrence then offered to surrender the gunboat, but the admiral would not accept it. Finally the offended lieutenant returned to his vessel without his men. On receiving an official account of this outrage, Rodgers issued the following spirited order to the commanders of his fleet:

"An insult offered to the flag of the United States of America on the 12th of June last near Cadiz by a British squadron under the command of Admiral Collingwood induces me as the commander-in-chief of the United States' forces in these seas to direct that you do not under any pretence whatever suffer your vessel to be detained or your men to be taken out of your vessel without you are compelled so to do by superior force; in which case, having resisted to the utmost of your power, you are directed to surrender your vessel as you would to any other common enemy, but on no account to leave her until after you have struck your colors; after which,

if you are not compelled by the author or authors of such insult and violence to quit your vessel, you are directed by me so to do; and going on board the enemy to deliver your sword to the commanding officer of the enemy's vessel, and not return to your own again unless you are absolutely put on board her by force. On saying that you are not to suffer your vessel to be detained, you are not to consider that it extends to the prevention of your giving every satisfaction to the vessels of war you may meet on the high seas whose nations are at peace with the United States, so far as a friendly intercourse will justify."

While the commodore was preparing his fleet for the expedition against Tunis, he ordered several ships to proceed on detached service. The brig "Argus," Master-commandant Isaac Hull, was sent to Alexandria with fourteen thousand dollars to pay a debt incurred by Eaton. As a measure of precaution the frigate "Congress," Captain Stephen Decatur, and schooner "Vixen," Master-commandant George Cox, were directed to cruise off Tunis and guard our interests in that quarter. Captain James Barron was ordered to convey home in the "President" his sick brother and several of the officers of the "Philadelphia." Commodore Barron had recently visited Catania and Mount Etna for the benefit of his health. Rodgers always spoke of him in the highest terms and seems to have regarded him as a friend. For Captain James, however, he acquired during this cruise a strong antipathy.

On July 14, 1805, the fleet sailed from Syracuse for Malta where additional supplies were taken on board, and on the twenty-second it was ready for sea. The commodore's largest vessel was his flag-ship "Constitution," 44. Next in size and armament were the fri-

gates "Constellation," 36, Captain H. G. Campbell; "Essex," 32, Master-commandant Charles Stewart; and "John Adams," 28, Master-commandant John Shaw. The small craft consisted of the brig "Siren," schooners "Nautilus" and "Enterprise," sloop "Hornet," transport "Franklin," and eight gunboats. There were in all seventeen vessels, the largest fleet of the American navy that had ever gone to sea. On board the flag-ship was Colonel Tobias Lear, whose credentials empowered him to adjust terms of conciliation with any or all of the Barbary rulers. On July twenty-third, Rodgers sailed from Malta, and eight days later, after a tedious passage, arrived in Tunis Bay, where he was joined by several other vessels of his squadron. On August first, the fleet anchored in the road of the Goletta, about four miles from the city.

The bey of Tunis at this time was Hamuda Pasha, a most interesting character. During his long rule, which began in 1782, he had been frequently at war with the neighboring powers. Like other Barbary potentates in his pride, cruelty, ignorance, religious fanaticism, and love of pomp, he was nevertheless in many respects far superior to the generality of them. He had a quick understanding and was able to pursue a course of action with firmness and decision. At times rash and foolish, he was more often prudent and circumspect. One of our consuls said that the bey was as ignorant as the figurehead of the "Constitution" in respect to letters or the political history or situation of any country on earth beyond the bounds of his horizon, and that he had no knowledge of the strength, wealth, and size of the United States. "I do not esteem him a man of duplicity," the consul wrote, "although there is a great deal of what might be styled finesse and court intrigue in him,

joined with a degree of candor and simplicity which in my estimation form a strange or rather curious accommodation in his character. It would require a sorcerer to find him out and the Witch of Endor to render him a reason."

In 1797, Hamuda entered into a treaty with the United States, but he soon became dissatisfied with it and began to make unreasonable demands of our consuls for tribute. At times he would threaten war, first blowing hot and then cold. Sympathizing with the pasha in his difficulties with our government, the bey viewed with alarm the increase of the American squadron in the Mediterranean and its probable reduction of Tripoli. He refused to recognize Tripoli as a blockaded port, and claimed that it was open to his vessels. He demanded as a right the release of a certain Tunisian xebec and her two prizes that were captured in April, 1805, by our forces, when they were trying to run the blockade; and he charged our consul at Tunis to tell the American commander-in-chief that the bey would never cease from his demands whatever the issue. Rodgers wrote to Hamuda that his claims respecting the ships were wholly inadmissible, and that he intended to convince him that his subjects would be no longer permitted to infringe our rights with impunity. The bey well deserved the chastisement that Rodgers was anxious to administer to him. The peace with Tripoli and the presence of a large fleet in the Mediterranean made it possible for the commodore to take a bold and independent stand.

Soon after his arrival in Tunis Bay, Rodgers sent the schooner "Nautilus" to the city to bring off the American consul, Dr. George Davis, who on August second, came aboard the flag-ship and gave a complete account



of all his conferences with Hamuda. In conversation with Davis the bey had recently assumed a most menacing tone. "The President of the United States must know," he said, "that my father and grandfather have sat on the throne and ruled a kingdom. He shall learn from me that Hamuda is not yet dead, and every crowned head of Europe shall approve the eternal continuance of that war which you seem resolved to force me into; for I solemnly pledge myself that, if war is the result, never while I have a soldier to fire a gun will I accord peace. You may form some idea of my character from the difficulty you had to negotiate a peace because you weakly permitted the dey of Algiers to interfere. You may also learn my conduct to the Venetians who rashly forced me into a war; and if I am doomed to engage in another, it shall be continued to the last hour of my existence. I frankly tell you that the famine in my country has prevented my declaring war against you, in order that I might convince my subjects that their miseries should not be increased unless I was forced thereto. Without such a motive you certainly never would have been asked the reason why you captured my vessels, but that a just motive to a protraction of our difficulties must be sacrificed to those considerations which I owe myself and all Europe. You are the first power which has ever captured a Tunisian cruiser in full peace on any pretext whatever. You are the first that has ever offered unprovoked insults to Hamuda Pasha, who has ruled a kingdom for twenty-seven years and been respected by all the world as a sovereign. If I was to submit to such acts of outrage, what should I expect from nations far more powerful than yourselves?"<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For this and the succeeding quotations respecting the bey, see the Rodgers Papers and Goldsborough's *United States Naval Chronicle*, 279-287.

After conferring with Davis, the commodore summoned Colonel Lear and the senior commanders of the squadron to a council of war on board the "Constitution," and submitted to them all the information respecting the conduct of the bey that he possessed. The council of war decided that the commodore should send the following spirited ultimatum to the bey: "It is with equal pain and astonishment that I was yesterday made acquainted by George Davis, Esq., *chargé d'affaires* to your court, with your declaration wherein you informed him that my appearance here with the squadron under my command would determine an immediate declaration of war on your part. If this be the case, those explanations which brought me here, and which I had hoped would reëstablish a good understanding between your excellency and the government of my country, are unnecessary, as it now only rests for me in justification of my conduct to request that your excellency will have the goodness to inform me whether there has been any mistake in the application of your assertion tending to a declaration of war with the United States; as your excellency will without doubt see the propriety, as also the necessity, on my part of commencing both defensive and offensive operations against your regency in the course of thirty-six hours, should I not hear from you on this important and equally (to me) painful subject."

Rodgers considered the language of the bey highly insulting to our government. "Indeed so much so," he said, "as ought in my humble opinion to have induced Mr. Davis (particularly as he knew the force we had near at hand, and being previously informed of my intentions) to have taken his leave. This would have given me an opportunity to have assumed entirely a different posture. . . War was the interest of the United

States, and had Mr. Davis have left the regency at a moment when such violent threats and gross insult were offered, I should have had a fair pretext for discussing the subject by the language of our cannon—the only language capable of making an imperious Barbary pirate correct his conduct. . . . Until the day of my death I shall lament that our affairs were now at a point which required decisive measures, yet nevertheless it required the authority of government to authorize my drawing the sword of the nation in defence of its honor and interest at a moment when I knew our force was sufficient, in ten days, to have made him call for mercy on his bended knees.”

With Rodgers's letter, dated August second (and also with one written by Lear of the same date) Davis repaired to the royal palace. On receiving it, the bey explained that neither he nor his Christian secretaries understood English; whereupon, Davis volunteered to give him its substance, which he proceeded to do. Hamuda replied at once. While his words were free from menace, they were nevertheless strong and bold. Skilled in the tactics of diplomacy, he chose his position with excellent judgment. “The commodore stipulates thirty-six hours for my answer,” he said. “If he will have it in the Turkish or Moorish language, it shall be given immediately; but there is no Christian clerk at this time to write him. I however will give you my answer by word of mouth and beg you to communicate it. My conduct shall be guided wholly by the letter and spirit of the treaty; and I have already taken the measures which it points out, to wit, a proper representation to the President of the United States for redress of grievances. Until an answer is received from him, I shall strictly maintain the peace which exists between us; but,

if your commodore attacks or detains any of my vessels, cruisers, or merchantmen, or fires a single gun with a hostile intention, that instant your flag shall be hauled down. I will hold no converse with him, either relative to peace or war, change of treaties, or any other public concerns, excepting on the subject of the captured vessels. No hostilities shall be commenced by me. His boats may pass freely and without any kind of interruption. It therefore rests with him to respect the treaty made by his master, or not; for altho I am resolved not to provoke a commencement of hostilities, still I shall not shrink from it when properly invited. I made the treaty with the President of the United States, and not with the commodore."

On the receipt of Hamuda's reply, Rodgers called another council of war. It took the position that the bey's language expressed his desire to avoid hostilities. It decided, however, that his word alone was not sufficient, and that he should be required to give a written guarantee of his intentions to maintain peace, duly witnessed by the British and French consuls. On August fourth, the commodore gave instructions to Davis in accordance with the council of war's decision. In case the bey refused to give the guarantee, the consul was to inform him that his capital was to be blockaded and his cruisers prevented from injuring American commerce until the commander-in-chief should receive instructions from Washington. After Davis had gone ashore, Rodgers decided to be more specific in his demands. He therefore prescribed the following form of guarantee and gave the bey three days within which to sign it: "Whereas the Commander-in-chief of the squadron of the United States of America now lying in Tunis bay has been induced to believe that it was my determination

to declare war against the said United States in consequence of one of my cruisers and her two prizes having been detained by the aforesaid squadron in their attempting to enter Tripoli during the late blockade of that place, or some other cause; I do hereby solemnly declare that it is not my intention and that I will not commence hostilities or declare war against the said United States so long as the treaty existing between myself and the said United States shall be faithfully adhered to by them, and not until I shall have made an application to the government of the United States for redress of any injuries which I may receive or have received from the said United States and have been refused such redress." Captain Stephen Decatur was chosen to carry the guarantee to Davis, and he was instructed to be present as Rodgers's representative when it was presented to the bey.

In the meantime the bey had read the letters of Rodgers and Lear of August second. From the communication of the consul-general he learned that Lear was empowered by his government to treat with him. For this, or some other, reason his replies were quite conciliatory, and in marked contrast with his verbal answer to Davis. He now assumed that the visit of the squadron to his capital was a friendly one, and was designed to adjust harmoniously the existing differences between the two governments. His letter to Rodgers, dated August fifth, read as follows:

"In answer to your letter, dated 2nd of August, which I received the day before yesterday, I declare it was never my intention to refuse seeing or treating with you any time you presented yourself in a friendly manner, that is with only a part of your squadron, as I have always had the pleasure of seeing done by commanders

sent by other powers, my friends. But it is certain that I have positively declared to the person charged with the affairs of your government, residing here, that I did not know how to tolerate your presenting yourself in a hostile and powerful manner, as you now have done with all the force under your command, when there was no reason for so doing, except that of a friendly treaty to be decided on: for it is by explanation and clearness of different points that the consolations of good harmony, which happily subsist between your government and me, are to exist and more and more augment. This for my part I have always maintained and will maintain, according to the tenor of the stipulated and solemn ratification of our treaty. But I am now informed that Consul-general Lear is invested with the power to make with me a final treaty; in consequence of which I invite him to come in person in the character which is conferred on him by the President, that he may explain to me the desires of the same. With pleasure I declare if you find it proper to accompany him you will be very welcome, and would give me a particular pleasure. In the meantime I have the pleasure of wishing you all happiness."

On August seventh, Davis returned to the "Constitution" without having procured the bey's signature to the written guarantee. The bey had declined to receive Captain Decatur as Rodgers's official representative, and the captain had in a most spirited manner refused to visit him in any other capacity and had at once returned to the flag-ship. This action greatly alarmed the bey, who sent a messenger post-haste to Lear with a most conciliatory letter. He declared that he wished to see the consul-general and speak with him and listen to his explanations. "Be so good," he wrote in conclu-

sion, "as to make my compliments to Commodore Rodgers and inform him that I also wrote to him the day before yesterday and have no doubt but that the messenger has consigned to him my answer."

The commodore decided to insist on the signing of the guarantee. Accordingly on August eighth, he gave Davis the following instructions: "As I have not received that satisfaction from His Excellency, the Bey of Tunis, which the nature of our affairs requires, I now am induced to desire that, in case he does not give you the guarantee by tomorrow at noon which you have been directed to demand, you inform him that no farther advances will be made by me, and that in consequence of his refusal you are directed to repair on board the squadron tomorrow by 4 o'clock p.m." Davis went again to the palace and presented the guarantee to Hamuda, who refused to sign it in the presence of the British and French consuls, declaring that his seal was sufficient authentication. Our consul thereupon took final leave of the bey, collected his baggage, and, accompanied by his secretary and dragoman, went on board the flag-ship.

"It was now," Rodgers wrote, "that I saw our situation was such as to require the most decisive measures, at least to a certain extent; and this I was enabled to express by a brig (whose colors I could not distinguish, but believe that they were Rigutian) that got underweigh, which I fired two shots at, conceiving at the time that she had been ordered to get under sail in order to prove whether I would verify my last declaration, of which Mr. Davis was the medium of conveyance and which produced the cessation of his functions. . . . I now ordered the 'Nautilus,' Captain Dent, to get underweigh and lay off the entrance of the bay and to board

all vessels going out, and if they belonged to Tunis and were armed in any shape, to send them into port again; and all ships coming in, and if belonging to Tunis to ascertain whether they had committed any depredations on our commerce, previous to suffering them to pass, and at any rate if Tunisian cruisers to oblige them to return into this port. On the morning of the 10th of August the 'Vixen,' Captain Cox, and 'Enterprise,' Captain Robinson, were directed to get underweigh and cruise at the entrance of the bay under the same orders which Captain Dent had received the preceding day. At noon about two hours after the sailing of the two latter vessels the bey sent by express letter 'L' directed to Colonel Lear, and by which you will discover the panic that had taken possession of his royal breast."

The communication of the bey to which Rodgers refers is a lengthy one, and is dated August ninth. In this the bey declares that some misunderstanding of his intentions or his language must certainly have arisen. He reiterates his sentiments of peace and friendship, and he insists that he has kept his treaty with the United States. He says that he is quite willing to negotiate with Lear. Most important of all are his concluding words, for they formed the grounds of a compromise: "More again to convince you of my peaceable intentions and good friendship and also the esteem I have for the President, whatever may be your intentions or that of the commodore no more to treat with me until new orders are received. After what has happened, I propose to you to send a person of distinction of my regency to your government to explain and accommodate, which will accelerate the final depending between us. If the commodore will receive him on board his or any other vessel of the squadron, on his advisal he shall be imme-



diately sent; but if not, I will dispatch him in a vessel chartered by myself for that purpose."

Rodgers now decided to waive the guarantee and to begin negotiations. On August twelfth, Consul-general Lear, accompanied by Chaplain Cruize of the "Constellation," went ashore, and on the two succeeding days held conferences with the bey, in which the differences between the two governments were thoroughly considered. At one time during the negotiations Hamuda was disposed to withdraw his proposal in respect to the sending of an ambassador to the United States. Believing that the wiley ruler was equivocating, Rodgers wrote to Lear that Hamuda must do one of three things by simple request, or else do all three by force. "He must give the guarantee already required; or he must give security for peace and send a minister to the United States; or he must make such alterations in the treaty as you may require. I have only to repeat that, if he does not do all that is necessary and proper, at the risk of my conduct being disapproved by my country he shall feel the vengeance of the squadron now in this bay."

The agreement reached by Lear and Hamuda was in conformity with the commodore's second demand. The bey agreed to send an ambassador to Washington to adjust there all differences between the two governments, and to give the commodore assurance that he would maintain peace agreeable to the treaty of 1797. On August fourteenth, he wrote Rodgers the following conciliatory letter:

"Leaving to Consul-general Lear the care of informing you how long and friendly were our conferences of yesterday and today, I limit myself by the present to confirm in the most solemn manner that which

I have wrote to you, and the same to Consul-general Lear, assuring you that it was never my intention to declare war against your nation nor to begin any hostilities if not first provoked on your part. I conclude this misunderstanding between us must have originated from those who have not well understood or well remembered my words, or my writings not being well understood or explained. In this state of affairs, and to dispel all shade of coldness or misunderstanding between the two nations, I have resolved to send, without delay, an ambassador to the President of the United States to make a reclamation relative to the xebec and two prizes in question. I do not hesitate a moment in giving you my word of honor and that of a prince, as I reciprocally demand of you, that I will not commit any hostilities whatsoever or make the least change in the present peace existing between us until the return of my ambassador from your country with the ratification of peace or some other propositions or determinations of the President. Be pleased then, in this interval, to send me a *chargé d'affaires*, until there is by the President chosen, named, and sent to me a consul. With confirming the above said, I salute you and wish you happiness."

On August fifteenth, Colonel Lear returned to the flag-ship and reported that his mission had resulted satisfactorily. The commodore at once called in the cruisers that had been stationed at the mouth of the bay and suspended all defensive operations. He appointed Dr. James Dodge, the surgeon of the "Constitution" to act as *chargé d'affaires* at the court of Tunis. The bey chose as his ambassador to America Suliman Mellimelni, a distinguished Tunisian soldier and statesman. He had formerly commanded his master's army, and

had fought gallantly in his country's wars with Algiers and Turkey. On August twenty-seventh, Mellimelni paid Rodgers a visit of respect on board the "Constitution." The yards were manned and a salute of eleven guns were fired in his honor. After inspecting the ship and dining with the commodore, he returned to Tunis. On September first, the ambassador and his suite embarked for America on board the frigate "Congress," Captain Stephen Decatur. She sailed on September fifth and arrived at Washington on November twenty-ninth.

The expedition to Tunis ended with the sailing of the "Congress." It had resulted in giving the bey an impression of the strength of the United States that was a revelation to him. He now took pains to collect much information respecting the size, situation, and resources of our country. The foreign consuls at Tunis were much astonished at Rodgers's success, and some of them said that no other nation had ever negotiated with Hamuda on such favorable terms. Formerly, the corsair rulers had refused to deliver to our agents in Barbary American vessels wrongfully captured; now, one of these potentates was sending an ambassador to America to reclaim Barbary vessels legally captured. "It must be mortifying to some of the neighboring European powers," our consul at Tripoli wrote to Rodgers on hearing of the result of the expedition, "to see that the Barbary states have been taught their first lessons of humiliation from the Western World."

As soon as the affair with Tunis was settled, Rodgers reorganized his squadron. The frigate "Essex," Captain H. G. Campbell, and the schooner "Vixen," Master-commandant George Cox, were stationed at Gibraltar to protect our commerce in that quarter. The

three frigates "Congress," "Constellation," and "John Adams," and brig "Franklin" were sent home. The rest of the fleet, under the immediate command of the commodore, remained up the Mediterranean with its headquarters at Syracuse. This division contained the flag-ship "Constitution," the brig "Argus," Master-commandant Isaac Hull; schooner "Enterprise," Lieutenant David Porter; brig "Siren," Master-commandant John Smith; schooner "Nautilus," Lieutenant Samuel Evans; sloop "Hornet," Lieutenant W. M. Crane; eight gunboats; and the bomb vessels "Vengeance" and "Spitfire." During the ensuing winter Rodgers increased his forces by placing in commission some of the small craft that had been purchased in the Adriatic.

Early in September the "Constitution" sailed from Tunis for Syracuse, and thence to Leghorn by way of Messina and Naples. The chief object of the commodore's visit to the Italian ports was the procuring of money for the squadron from the American agents residing there. Colonel Lear, who was returning to his post at Algiers, accompanied him, wishing to purchase in Italy the biennial present now due the bey. At Leghorn Rodgers was grossly insulted by the military authorities. Twice in attempting to enter the city, he was rudely turned back by a guard of soldiers and refused admittance. Mortified at such treatment, he appealed for redress to General Villette, the chief officer of the city. Not obtaining it, he tartly informed the general that an American commodore possessed the power of opening city gates with as much facility as the governor of Leghorn. Finally he appealed his case to the First Minister of the Queen Regent of Etruria, but the "Constitution" sailed before the difficulty was settled. The only

other instance in which our commanding officers met with disrespect from Italian port officials occurred at Genoa. The commander of the "Siren," which vessel by the way was the first ship of our navy to visit the birthplace of Columbus, was badly treated by the French agent at that place.

The "Constitution" left Leghorn on November ninth and eight days later arrived at Algiers bay. A sudden gale, however, forced her to put to sea, and she did not come to anchor until the nineteenth, when Colonel Lear disembarked. During his absence from his post the dey had been assassinated, and a new ruler, the private secretary of the old one, had assumed the supreme power. The new dey received Lear with manifestations of respect and friendship. Since our affairs with this regency were on a satisfactory footing, the commodore made but a brief stay. On November twentieth, he sailed for Syracuse where eight days later he rejoined his squadron.

Busy with his naval duties, Rodgers spent the ensuing winter and spring chiefly at Syracuse. Occasionally, however, he visited Malta, where he was cordially received by the English governor and his wife Sir Alexander and Lady Ball. This official, who had been one of Nelson's captains, manifested much interest in our officers and navy during the Tripolitan War. He had been exceedingly attentive to the needs of Commodore Preble, who on his return home purchased two fishing smacks and sent them to the governor as an expression of the American government's appreciation of his kindness. Sir Alexander was greatly pleased with the gift and he wrote a very handsome letter expressive of his gratitude to Rodgers, to whom had fallen the duty of delivering the vessels.

During his stay at Syracuse, Rodgers found active employment for several of the smaller vessels of his fleet. First the "Argus," Hull, and later the "Enterprise," Porter, was sent to Naples to protect our interests there in the winter of 1805-1806 when Joseph Bonaparte and a French army took possession of the city. Now and then vessels were ordered to the straits, the Barbary capitals, and the Italian ports to communicate with our officials. In this way the commodore kept himself in touch with affairs in the Mediterranean. The first vessel to visit Tripoli after peace was restored was the "Enterprise," Porter. She returned to Malta in the fall of 1805 bringing word that the pasha was still kindly disposed towards us. She was followed by "Gunboat No. 8," which vessel, Rodgers wrote, excited much curiosity in Tripoli. "She was saluted with twenty-one guns on her arrival, which she returned in so handsome a manner both as to time and regularity that the most knowing of the Tripolitans observed that it would have done no discredit to a ship of the line. The pasha observed that she was very different from his boats and requested permission to have a draft taken of her by his Spanish carpenter. Lieutenant Haraden, her commander, informed him that this he could not permit without my consent, but gave permission to examine her. While 'No. 8' lay at Tripoli one of her marines deserted and took the necessary steps to constitute himself a Turk, and afterwards got to the pasha's castle and demanded protection. However, after a remonstrance by Mr. Ridgely, our chargé d'affaires, he was delivered up by the pasha in direct opposition to their religious and civil laws, the pasha asserting, I understood from Lieutenant Haraden, that he would not have done the like for any other Christian nation."

While Rodgers was in command of the squadron, peace and harmony prevailed among its officers, and the discipline on board its vessels (to use his own words) "would not have done discredit to a much older service than our own." That this state of affairs was exceptional the letters written home by some of the officers in the early part of the Tripolitan War plainly reveal. The following extract is from a letter of an officer of the "New York," dated March 26, 1803: "While lying at Malta, Lieutenant Van Dyke and the first lieutenant of marines, Mr. Osborne, went on shore to settle a trifling dispute. After exchanging four shots, Lieutenant Van Dyke received a ball in his right thigh, which passed through and was extracted from his left, which terminated his existence after an illness of three weeks. About the same time a duel was fought between Mr. Bainbridge, a midshipman of the 'New York,' and Mr. Cochran, an English gentleman. The latter was the challenger and was killed."

The commodore was always a rigid disciplinarian, and his ships were models of order, neatness, and regularity. He took much pride in his profession, and exacted of his officers an unhesitating obedience and a minute observance of naval customs. Quick to discern merit and to reward it, he was equally quick to discover weakness and negligence and to censure them. Of his younger commanding officers, he valued most Hull and Porter. On one occasion he spoke of Lieutenant James Lawrence as an officer from whom his country had much to expect. Impressed by the superior qualities of O. H. Perry, he ordered him to report for duty as a lieutenant on board the flag-ship, and when the commodore shifted his pennant to the "Essex," that promising young officer went with him. Besides Perry,

Lieutenants David Porter and Edward Trenchard and Midshipmen John Downes and G. W. Rodgers, served on board the "Constitution." All of these officers later reached the highest naval rank.

Never touching strong drink himself, Rodgers had little sympathy for any one who used it to excess. In the fall of 1805, he sent the lieutenant commandant of the "Spitfire" home as a punishment for intemperance. On that vessel's passage to the Mediterranean, her commander had at times been so drunk as to be unfit for duty. He had delayed the progress of his vessel in order to keep company with the master of a merchantman, whom he invited to dine with him. "This latter circumstance alone," Rodgers wrote, "considering the orders he was under at the time, is proof positive that he is not, to give it no harder name, calculated for the service."

The five months that Rodgers spent at Syracuse was a period of much anxiety to him. In the fall of 1805, soon after the news of the peace with Tripoli reached Washington, Jefferson ordered all the vessels of the Mediterranean squadron to return home, with the exception of three, a frigate and two small craft. Since the orders were issued before the president learned of the expedition to Tunis, the commodore felt justified in delaying their execution. He believed that it was imprudent to reduce the squadron until the return of the Tunisian ambassador and the ratification by the bey of the measures agreed to by the ambassador and the American government. He expected Jefferson to take a similar view when he learned all the circumstances of the Tunisian affair and to countermand his previous orders. All winter the commodore awaited the receipt of fresh commands from Washington. Spring came, and



still no letters. There was nothing to do, but to execute the orders of the previous fall. He therefore prepared his squadron for its return home.

After abandoning the naval hospital at Syracuse and settling the naval accounts at that port and at Malta, the commodore on May first sailed with his fleet for Gibraltar, calling on his way at Tunis and Algiers. At the latter capital, accompanied by Lear, he paid a visit to the new dey who showed him much civility, and consented to receive him wearing his sword. "I am the first Christian," Rodgers wrote to the secretary of the navy, "that has ever been permitted to visit the dey of Algiers with side arms, and I think it worth remarking to you, particularly as I have reason to believe he had understood by Colonel Lear's dragoman that a refusal to receive me with my sword would be to him a deprivation of my intended visit." The squadron arrived at Gibraltar on the twenty-first of May.

Here Rodgers received a brief letter from the department implying that its previous orders were to be executed. While he had a naval man's respect for his official superiors and seldom criticised them, he did on this occasion express warmly his disapprobation of the policy of his government, as may be seen from the following words addressed to Lear: "No doubt the gunboats will be sent directly back to the Mediterranean after their arrival in America. This is singular work. God help our country!" On May twenty-seventh, he removed his pennant to the "Essex" and gave Captain Campbell command of the "Constitution" and of the squadron that was to be left in the Mediterranean, which, in addition to the flag-ship, was to consist of the "Enterprise," Master-commandant David Porter, and the brig "Hornet," Lieutenant J. H. Dent. On May

twenty-eighth, the "Argus" and "Siren" sailed for America. On account of adverse winds, Rodgers did not weigh anchor until the third of June, on which day the "Essex," "Vixen," "Vengeance," "Spitfire," sloop "Hornet," and the eight gunboats went to sea. They were soon followed by the "Nautilus." After seeing the ships under his immediate command safely out of the straits, the commodore parted company with them, having ordered Master-commandant George Cox to conduct them to Charleston, South Carolina. The "Essex" reached Washington on July twenty-seventh, 1806.

It had now been more than two years since Rodgers left America. His naval service during this period had been most varied and most arduous. As senior officer under Commodore Barron, he had commanded the blockading squadron off Tripoli. When suddenly called to assume the duties of commander-in-chief, he had carried out his predecessor's policy and had assisted Lear in making a permanent peace with the pasha and in obtaining the release of more than three hundred captive officers and seamen. He had brought before Tunis the largest fleet of American naval vessels that had ever been assembled, and under the mouths of his cannon had conducted a successful negotiation with the sagacious ruler of that country. In the performance of these and many other duties, the commodore had exhibited energy, skill, resource, decision, power of combination, and ardent devotion to his country's interests. His fellow officers freely expressed their appreciation of his sterling character and substantial services. The principal lieutenants commandant of the fleet united in writing him a friendly letter approving of his conduct and testifying to their high regard for him, and he

received several similar communications from the officers of the "Constitution."

A few weeks after Rodgers arrived in America the Tunisian ambassador, Mellimelni, sailed home, after a stay of about nine months. On establishing himself in Washington, in November, 1805, the ambassador formally demanded of our government the restoration of the three vessels whose ownership was in dispute. To conciliate the bey, Jefferson relinquished all claims to them. Encouraged by his success, Mellimelni asked for a supply of naval stores as the price of a three years' armistice. This was too much for even our peace-loving president, who refused to grant the extortion. Later, however, his resolution weakened, and he decided to give the bey the brig "Franklin" and a load of naval stores, and to send the ambassador home on board of her. This plan was abandoned when Mellimelni refused for some trivial reason to return in this manner. Finally the government chartered the ship "Two Brothers" and indulged the ambassador to the extent of furnishing him with an agent to purchase a cargo and of permitting him to load it on board the ship and have it conveyed to the Mediterranean, where he doubtless realized a handsome profit on his venture. In September, 1806, the "Two Brothers," with Mellimelni as a passenger, sailed from Boston for Tunis.

The bey's ambassador attracted much attention in Washington and other eastern cities which he visited. He was one of the first African potentates to honor this country with his presence. His stay at the capital afforded much amusement to its inhabitants, who long remembered his strange costumes, his Arabian horses, his oriental customs, and his peculiar prayers and religious exercises. Among his attendants was a passionate

fellow named Hadji Mohammed, who quarreled with a barber and threatened to kill him. The barber complained to Secretary of State James Madison, who sent one of the officials of his department to call upon Mellimelni and request him to curb the impetuosity of his follower. The ambassador received the official with the usual forms of oriental politeness, and having heard his complaint spoke a few words to one of his attendants who went out and presently returned with poor Hadji Mohammed guarded by four Tunisians with drawn swords. The official, who was a mild and gentle man, was greatly alarmed at this spectacle. He was still more shocked when Mellimelni expressed a desire to please the American government and offered to have the culprit's head taken off at once and sent to Madison, unless the secretary of state or the president might prefer to witness the decapitation. The frightened official hastened to assure the ambassador that no such reparation was demanded, and that it was only necessary for him to enjoin his attendant to refrain from acts of violence.

Jefferson's friendly yielding to the demands of Mellimelni is one of many indications that he did not enter into the commodore's plans and wishes to discipline the bey of Tunis by the use of force. In his annual messages he made no mention of the Tunisian expedition. He did not publicly commend Rodgers for his efficient services in ending the war with Tripoli and in humiliating the bey. It ill befitted the peaceful president, now embarked on his cheese-paring naval policy, to welcome home the returning hero.

With the arrival of the fleet in the United States in the summer of 1806, our wars with the Barbary corsairs came to an end. No other officer played so large a part

in them as Rodgers. As senior officer under Morris and Barron, he served as their chief of staff and as commander of the blockading fleet off Tripoli. He was three times commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean squadron. Two of the largest cruisers of the pasha's navy and several smaller craft surrendered to him. In settling our difficulties with Morocco he shared the honors with Preble; during the peace negotiations with Tripoli he commanded the American squadron; and in the expedition to Tunis he was the chief actor and the commanding officer. Commodore John Rodgers must always be given a conspicuous and honorable place in the history of our wars with the Barbary States. Upon him and Commodore Edward Preble devolved the execution of nearly all the important naval operations. It was these two officers who humbled the proud and insulting corsairs, set an example to all Europe of a spirited and forcible resistance to extortion and blackmail, strengthened abroad our reputation as a nation for military courage and political initiative, and popularized, trained, and consolidated our infant navy.



## VIII. DUTIES ON SHORE AND AT SEA

1806-1810

AS soon as the wars with Barbary were ended, the President and Congress decided to reduce the navy in commission to the lowest possible terms. In April, 1806, Congress fixed the number of seamen and boys at nine hundred and twenty-five. In the summer of that year most of the vessels of Rodgers's squadron of 1805-1806 were laid up in ordinary, chiefly at Washington. By the fall the fleet then in active service consisted of a frigate and two small craft in the Mediterranean and two bomb-ketches at New Orleans. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that some of the leading officers sought employment in the merchant marine. For a time Rodgers was casting about for the command of an East Indiaman. For those officers who were willing to remain in the service, Jefferson had a somewhat engrossing task, the superintending of the construction of gunboats. Since these small craft cost but little to build, and almost nothing for maintenance as they could be hauled up on shore safe from the ravages of wind and wave, Congress readily fell in with the president's plans, and in 1803-1805, authorized the construction of forty gunboats, in 1806, fifty, and in 1807, one hundred eighty-eight. Jefferson set some of his ablest commanders to building these vessels, Preble at Portland, Decatur at Newport, Hull at Middletown, Stewart at New York, and the Barrons in Virginia. In the fall of 1806, Commodore Rodgers was ordered to construct a gunboat at Havre de Grace, Maryland. He

was also to prove the naval cannon that were being made at Cecil furnace near the mouth of the Susquehanna. He was employed at this work until July, 1807. The craft that he built was designated "Gunboat No. 7," and she had "the renown of being counted one of the fastest sailing vessels on our waters"—according to Commodore Tingey.

Soon after Rodgers's arrival at Havre de Grace the date of his marriage with Miss Minerva Denison was fixed. He was now thirty-three years old, and she twenty-two. Unfortunately no description of the bride has come down to us. We know that she was a most comely and amiable young woman, a blonde with "pretty yellow hair," and rather short in stature. She sang remarkably well, preferring the old ballads; and played the piano-forte with much skill and spirit. Of the English poets, she was partial to Gray, Thomson, and Pope. The appearance of the bridegroom at this time is somewhat more distinct. He was a muscular, vigorous man, buoyantly alive, brave and modest, capable of deep feelings and strenuous energy; a little above the average in height, abundant coal-black hair, dark eyes and dark shaggy eyebrows; a handsome face bronzed by sea-winds and sunshine, an open countenance as befitted a sailor, and a look of firmness and resolution with a touch of imperiousness.

The young couple were quietly married in the green room at Sion Hill. The newspapers made but the briefest mention of the wedding, for in the olden days before the modern itch for publicity afflicted society the publication of intimate personal facts was considered vulgar. The *Baltimore Federal Gazette* for October 31, 1806, contains the following brief note: "Married on Tuesday, 21st instant, at Sion Hill, Harford county,



Maryland, by the Rev. John Allen, Commodore John Rodgers to Miss Minerva Denison."

For some time Commodore and Mrs. Rodgers remained at Sion Hill, but soon they went to live with the commodore's mother in Havre de Grace. While Rodgers was staying at the home of his mother an incident occurred which is characteristic of his daring and generous spirit. One evening in spring when the ice in the Susquehanna was breaking up and was moving down the river with great force, it was reported that a cow or other animal was to be seen floating on a block of ice. The commodore, who was at home, took a spyglass and after watching the object steadily for a few minutes said to his wife, "It is a woman!" and he ran at once to the shore. A negress had been crossing the river some five miles above Havre de Grace, when the ice at that point suddenly broke up and began moving down stream carrying her rapidly toward the open bay. At the village a crowd of spectators thronged the shore gaping in alarm at the unusual spectacle and listening to the faint cries for help that came from the poor creature. Rodgers offered a hundred dollars to any one who would go with him to her rescue, but no one accepted the offer. The spectators were unwilling to risk their lives in what seemed a vain attempt to save a human being doomed to destruction. Resolving to act alone, Rodgers seized two planks and by laying them alternately from one piece of ice to another finally reached the middle of the swollen stream where the frightened woman, now nearly overcome with cold and terror, was still supported on her frail craft. Taking her under his arm, he began his perilous return, which to the great astonishment of the spectators he accomplished, reaching the shore a considerable distance below the town. Inexpressible

was the relief of his wife and mother, who with bated breath watched the whole proceeding by means of a spyglass from the upper windows of their house.

Another incident which belongs to this period of Rodgers's life may be properly related at this point. While he never fought a duel, he came near doing so soon after he returned from the Mediterranean. In his day dueling was exceedingly common in the United States, and it received the sanction of many men of the highest social standing. Hamilton, Clay, Randolph, and Jackson gave or accepted challenges. The old newspapers abound with notices of these hostile meetings. For instance take the following extract, dated New York, April 26, 1786: "Died, much regretted, on Monday Evening, the 24th Instant, of a wound received last Friday in a Duel with Mr. Burling of Baltimore, Samuel Curson, Esq., of this City, a very respectable Citizen and one of the most eminent Merchants in the United States." In June, 1800, an American newspaper announced that twenty-one duels had been fought within six weeks, resulting in the killing of six men and the wounding of eleven.

The officer with whom Rodgers had a serious altercation was no less a man than Captain James Barron, who in 1820 killed Captain Stephen Decatur in a duel—the most notorious ever fought in this country. Of all the commanders of the Old Navy, the tragic mark was graven deepest on Barron. A Virginian by birth, he sprang from excellent naval stock. His father, James Barron Sr., was for several years during the American Revolution commodore of the Virginia navy, and his uncle, Richard Barron was one of its captains. A third brother, Lieutenant William Barron, was killed in 1778 by the bursting of a gun on board the frigate "Boston."

Commodore Samuel Barron was Captain James's brother, and Captain Samuel Barron, of both the Union and Confederate navies, was his nephew. A strange fate brought John Rodgers and James Barron into a close professional association and made them in the end bitter enemies. They were nominated and confirmed as lieutenants, and later as captains, on the same day. There is a letter of Secretary of the Navy Stoddert to President Adams written during the French War that couples these two officers in an official recommendation: "Lieutenant Rodgers, appointed first lieutenant of the 'Constellation' and now commanding the 'Insurgente' is a brave man and a good seaman; . . . Lieutenant Barron . . . is represented by Barry and indeed by every officer in the navy with whom I have communicated on the subject as one of the best officers in the navy." The first two gunboats of Jefferson's numerous flotilla were built respectively by Rodgers and Barron. From 1807 to 1838, Barron's name was next to Rodgers's on the navy list, and on the death of Rodgers in the latter year Barron succeeded him as the senior officer of the navy.

Reference has already been made to Commodore Rodgers's firm conviction that Captain Barron was secretly trying to prevent his succession to the office of commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean squadron in 1804-1805. The failure of Barron to leave at Gibraltar certain official statements respecting the crew of the "President," in accordance with Rodgers's orders to him, became the subject of a complaint of the commodore to the secretary of the navy in January, 1806. In May while Rodgers was at Gibraltar preparing to return home with his fleet, he was informed by the officers of the brig "Hornet," which vessel had recently

arrived in the Mediterranean, that various slanders injurious to his reputation were being circulated in America. The commodore was satisfied that the prime instigator of this personal abuse was Captain Barron. He seems also to have connected the captain with a malicious libel that appeared in the public prints about this time. One version of it read as follows: "No doubt you have heard of the death of Captain Gale of marines on board one of our frigates, run through by Captain Rodgers, who is under arrest. Some say Gale was shot. There is no doubt of his death." This calumny was publicly contradicted by Gale in the summer of 1806 by his insertion of the following note in the columns of the *National Intelligencer*, published at Washington:

"To the Public—I have seen with no little surprise a piece in a New York paper of the first of March last, wherein it states that I was run through the body and killed by Commodore Rodgers for remonstrating with him on the impropriety of flogging a marine. This has been done by some scandalous person, no doubt, to injure his character, and although the effect could only be temporary, yet people in general may suppose that it originated from some misunderstanding subsisting between him and me. I can assure the public that not only myself, but that every officer that served under his command, have always been on the most friendly terms with him. And the best proof of this is that every officer of us will be happy to sail with him at any future period. During the time that I was under his command it is only justice to say that he behaved towards me with every attention and politeness due an officer."

As soon as the commodore heard of these attacks on his character he decided on his course of action. On May twenty-seventh, he wrote from Gibraltar to Lear

at Algiers as follows: "I am sorry to find, more by verbal accounts than any thing I have seen in the papers, that my presence in America has become absolutely necessary in support of my character, which has been secretly aspersed in the most gross manner. As the newspapers will inform you in three months from this date I expect, I shall forbear at present troubling you with the effusions of my wounded soul." On June fourth, Rodgers sailed from Gibraltar for home. On July twenty-fourth, off Cape Henry, having sighted land, he addressed the following spirited letter to Captain Barron:

"From an honorable motive I am induced to acquaint you that I have at length arrived in America. I am now on my passage to Washington, and as it is full likely that I shall not remain many weeks in the United States, in justice to your reputation, I take this method to inform you that I shall hold myself ready to account to you at any time from the present immediate epoch to the same date of the ensuing month; and as I possess a mind superior to giving you any unnecessary trouble, permit me to add that in case I leave Washington it will only be for a few days to visit my friends in the country and to settle some family concerns which require my early attention. In this case by application to Captain Tingey at Washington, you may know where to address me. My reason for giving you this early information is because your rank as an officer and the nature of your claim entitles you to my first consideration. I therefore must request that you will not delay, as I consider myself bound by honor to answer to your demands before I can make any positive engagements with any other persons who may have similar claims."

On July twenty-ninth, Captain Barron replied brief-

ly, but firmly, as follows, in a letter dated at Hampton, Virginia: "I have to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 24 inst., in bed, where I have been confined for some days with a most painful indisposition. The moment I am able to report, you shall hear from me."

Rodgers chose his most intimate naval friend, Commodore Thomas Tingey, the commandant of the Washington navy-yard, to act as his second. Barron was represented by Colonel Franklin Wharton, the commandant of the marine corps, and also a resident of the capital. During August several letters passed between the seconds, but the continued illness of Barron prevented a hostile meeting. The progress of this unfortunate affair may be traced in a letter of Wharton to Tingey, dated August 24, 1806:

"In reply to your letter of yesterday I must remark that the extreme indisposition of Captain Barron by the last accounts received had confined him to his quarters, which consequently prevented and delayed his intended journey to Washington in order to call on Commodore Rodgers for the explanation which I have asked for and which it was necessary to demand within the time allowed by Commodore R. The answer now received to my application, viewed as an ultimatum, will render it necessary that Captain B. should repair with all practicable dispatch which his situation by disease will permit. This however must be uncertain, as it surely can not be expected that he is limited so rigidly to time as to counteract the opinion of his physicians or to make unavailing his directions. I however shall immediately communicate to Captain Barron the necessity of his presence at this place as soon as possible, and must then leave the propriety of the journey, as to his health at this moment, to the opinion of his surgeon, on which I



COMMODORE THOMAS TRUXTUN  
1799

From an engraving by C. Tiebout of  
the portrait made by A. Robertson



REAR-ADMIRAL JOHN RODGERS  
*about 1870*

Son of Commodore John Rodgers.  
From a negative by M. B. Brady



COMMODORE THOMAS TINGEY  
*about 1810*

From an engraving by C. B. J. F. de  
St. Mémin, in the possession of Mrs.  
Aulick Palmer, Washington, D.C.



COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR  
1813

From the *Analectic Magazine* (Phila-  
delphia), vol. i, 502. Engraved by D.  
Edwin from a portrait by G. Stuart





presume it ought to rest. I must now observe in reply to your observation that Commodore Rodgers is here solely at the instance of Captain Barron and is desirous of knowing whether I have any other claims on him for that gentleman, that, should Commodore Rodgers think delay may be the result of Captain B.'s illness or convalescence, I am authorized to state that if Commodore R. will proceed to Norfolk and by written or verbal communication inform Captain B. that he is there, then he, Captain B., will make every exertion which an invalid ought to do in bringing the affair to issue. Until the arrival of Captain B. here I certainly can have no further demand on Commodore R. You must be convinced that it would be highly improper to proceed in this business as is customary, without the parties were present. My communication to Captain B. will be made by the mail of this day. Should Commodore R. prefer the journey to Norfolk as the most expeditious way of bringing to a close this business, I have to request that you will so inform me as early as possible."

Tingey now sought an assurance that the duel would be fought if Rodgers went to Norfolk, but Wharton was unable to give it, as may be seen from his letter of August twenty-sixth: "Captain Barron has been requested to hasten to this place agreeably to my intimation to you on the 24th. I shall by this mail communicate the contents of your letter just received. I could not possibly assert that an immediate meeting of the parties would take place should Commodore Rodgers proceed to Norfolk. You will advert to my letter of the 24th on that subject. I have observed that as an invalid he will make every exertion to cause it."

The dispute dragged along during the succeeding autumn and early winter. The ardor of the principals

doubtless cooled with the elapsing of time. The commodore's friends urged him to seek an honorable reconciliation, as in their opinion no adequate cause for an appeal to arms existed. On January 30, 1807, Rodgers being then in Havre de Grace, where he was spending a short time with his family, wrote the following letter to Commodore Tingey:

"I have to acquaint you that I this morning received through the hands of my friend, Colonel Samuel Hughes of this place, a letter from Colonel John Stricker of Baltimore, stating his desire as also those of my other friends that an accommodation of the dispute between Captain Barron and myself might, if possible, take place. Impelled, my dear sir, from an honorable motive on my own account and from one equally respectful for the consideration of my friends, I have resolved not to push the affair between Captain Barron and myself farther than the laws of honor on my part absolutely direct. I, therefore, feeling the most implicit reliance in the discretion, judgment, and honor of yourself and Colonel Stricker, do hereby consent that through you an accommodation, if you shall agree that such is practicable, may take place. Any further exposition of the motives which have thus actuated me, I am sure you will consider unnecessary. Enclosed is the copy of Colonel Stricker's letter to me."

Rodgers's concession led at once to a peaceful settlement of the differences between himself and Barron. Printed circulars stating the terms of the adjustment were issued and were sent by the principals to their friends. Commodore Thomas Truxtun said that Rodgers was universally allowed to have acted with high honor. Tingey was overjoyed at the peaceful termination of the affair. "What my friend," he wrote to

Rodgers on February sixth, "can avail from the most favorable issue of this business, if pushed to the last extreme. Can such an issue, be it what it may, add one laurel to your brow? No. Your theme in the paths of honor and strict attention to duty in your country's service has been too conspicuous, and the knowledge thereof too widely extended, to gain an atom by the result of such a contest as this. Do you owe nothing to society, to your friends, your family, your country? Yes, you do, you are dear to the whole of which I have enumerated. And your life therefore ought not thus cruelly to be sported with, when a small and honorable acknowledgement will thus tend to insure its continued service to all. I could continue long on this subject, but assure myself that you will be well convinced that your compliance with the laudable mediation of your friends, as heretofore notified to me, can not, may not, shall not, but reflect to your honor."

Had not the differences between the two officers been peaceably settled, the duel would in all probability have taken place at Washington in February, 1807; for about the first of that month Barron arrived at the capital under orders from the secretary of the navy to take command of the frigate "Chesapeake" and to proceed to the Mediterranean. This vessel and the ship "Wasp" were to relieve the "Constitution" and "Enterprise," and Commodore Barron was to succeed Commodore Campbell as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean squadron. For two months or more Barron was at Washington assisting in the preparation of the "Chesapeake" for sea, which ship having been out of commission for some time needed much repairing and equipping to fit her for service. About the middle of April, the commodore went to Hampton to await the arrival of

his vessel, leaving her in charge of Acting Captain Charles Gordon.

At this time British ships of war and privateers infested our coast, and committed many outrages upon our commerce and seamen. It is not here necessary to consider the defense offered by Great Britain in justification of her conduct, for even if it be deemed adequate, it still remains true that the United States had many just grounds of complaint. Not a few of the seamen that Great Britain impressed were native-born Americans, and often the place and manner of her impressment of British-born subjects were such as to make her acts flagrant violations of our national character. For a time her ships blockaded New York, stopped American merchantmen entering or leaving that port, and impressed from them our seamen. In 1806, an American was killed by a shot fired off New York by a British man-of-war in bringing to a passing ship.

In 1807, a British squadron, which was blockading some French frigates in Chesapeake Bay, lost several men by desertion. In February of that year, five seamen deserted from the frigate "Melampus," one of the vessels of this squadron, while she was lying at Hampton Roads. Three of them were enlisted by the recruiting officer of the "Chesapeake." On being informed of this fact, the commander of the "Melampus" made a complaint to the British minister at Washington, who requested the American government to discharge them. When their case was referred to Secretary of the Navy Smith, he ordered Commodore Barron to investigate it. Barron found that the three seamen were American citizens and had been pressed into the British navy; and our government of course declined to dismiss them.

On June 4, 1807, the "Chesapeake" arrived at Hamp-

ton Roads from Washington, and two days later Barron came aboard her and hoisted his broad pennant. He then went ashore where he remained, with the exception of a single visit, until June twenty-first, when he embarked for the last time. On the morning of the twenty-second the "Chesapeake" weighed anchor to proceed on her voyage to the Mediterranean. As she stood from shore, she noticed a British squadron of four vessels lying to the south of her in Lynnhaven Bay. She also noted that one of these vessels, the "Leopard," 50, Captain S. P. Humphreys, got under way and went to sea ahead of her. At half past three o'clock in the afternoon, when the two ships were about nine miles south-east by east of Cape Henry, the "Leopard" stood toward the "Chesapeake," and on coming near hailed that ship, saying that she had dispatches for the commodore. Barron replied that he would heave to and would receive a boat from her. Presently a British officer, Lieutenant John Meade, came on board the American frigate and was shown to the commodore's cabin. He presented Barron with a note from Captain Humphreys in which was enclosed an order from Vice-admiral G. C. Berkley, commander-in-chief of His Majesty's squadron on the North Atlantic station, requiring the British commanders to search the "Chesapeake," in case they should meet her on the high seas, for deserters from the British ships "Belisle," "Bellona," "Triumph," "Chichester," "Halifax," and "Zenobia." Barron replied in writing that he knew of no such men as were described, that his recruiting officers were particularly instructed not to enter British deserters, and that his own instructions would not permit the crew of his ship to be mustered by any other than their own men.

After a stay of somewhat more than half an hour,

Meade returned to the "Leopard" with Barron's reply. On receiving it, Humphreys again hailed the "Chesapeake" and immediately fired several shots across her bow. Then ranging alongside of her, distant about two hundred feet, he discharged his guns, loaded with solid shot and canister, point blank into his surprised antagonist. Within fifteen minutes he had fired three broadsides.

As soon as Meade left the "Chesapeake," Barron ordered his gun deck to be cleared. Then, seeing that the "Leopard" was prepared for action, he requested Captain Gordon to send the men to quarters with as little noise as possible. Unfortunately his ship was (in his own words) "in an unprepared and unsuspecting state." Her gun deck was lumbered with sails, cables, and various other articles. Some of her guns were improperly mounted, and none of them were primed. There was no gunpowder, matches, or loggerheads at hand ready for use, nor was there a supply of wads and cartridges nearer than the magazine. Owing to the unusual way in which the men were summoned, not all of them went to quarters; and there was considerable confusion on board the ship. Under these distressing circumstances, Barron's attempts to return the fire of the "Leopard" were in vain. The guns were loaded, but the instruments for discharging them were wanting. After having withstood the frightful punishment of the "Leopard" for fifteen minutes, the commodore ordered his flag to be struck. While it was being hauled down, one gun was discharged by Lieutenant Allen by means of a live coal which was brought from the galley. Had the surrender been delayed a few minutes, most of the guns could have been discharged, but they could not have been reloaded in time to have been of service.

As soon as the firing ceased, Humphreys sent several of his officers to the "Chesapeake." They came aboard and mustered the crew and impressed into their service four seamen, the three deserters from the "Melampus" and one from the "Halifax." Barron now informed the British commander that he considered the "Chesapeake" his prize. Humphreys, however, refused to accept her, and, after offering his assistance to the injured ship, which was refused, he stood away for the British fleet in Lynnhaven Bay. The "Chesapeake" had three men killed, eight badly wounded, and ten slightly wounded. Among the latter were the commodore and Midshipman Broome. She was much damaged in masts, shrouds, and stays. Disgraced and humiliated, she returned to Norfolk.

This flagrant outrage created profound excitement throughout the nation, and was regarded by many as a proper cause for war. At Hampton a mob rendered furious by the sight of their dead and wounded comrades, wreaked their vengeance by destroying two hundred casks that had been used to carry water to the British squadron. At both Hampton and Norfolk the militia was called out to maintain order. Public meetings denouncing the "dastardly and unprovoked assault" were held in all parts of the Union. On July second, Jefferson issued a proclamation forbidding British armed vessels to enter our harbors. The administration, although determined to avoid war, felt compelled for the time being to prepare for it. The three vessels in the Mediterranean were recalled, many officers that were on furlough were ordered to report for duty, and the enlistment of seamen was begun. Since most of the larger ships were out of commission and in need of extensive repairs, the government turned to its gunboats

as its principal reliance. Early in July orders were given to assemble two fleets of these small craft, one at New York and the other at Norfolk. The command of the latter fell to Captain Stephen Decatur, who on June twenty-sixth had been directed to relieve Barron as the commander of the "Chesapeake."

The beginning of the war scare found Rodgers at Havre de Grace fitting out "Gunboat No. 7." On July 3, 1807, he was ordered to repair immediately to Washington; and six days later, being then present in the navy department, he was directed to go to New York and take command of the gunboats and bomb vessel at that place and have them prepared for service so as "to be ready at a moment's warning to receive their crews." He arrived at New York on the sixteenth of July and for the four succeeding months was busily occupied with his new duties. His flotilla, which at first consisted of the bomb-ketch "Vengeance" and fourteen gunboats, was soon augmented by the addition of the two bomb-ketches "Aetna" and "Vesuvius," previously stationed at New Orleans, and of seventeen gunboats, constructed at Portland, Newport, and Middletown, in New England. The Portland boats were built by Commodore Preble and were brought to New York by Lieutenant James Lawrence. The Newport craft were commanded by Lieutenant O. H. Perry previous to their joining the flotilla.

By the middle of September, Rodgers had assembled a squadron of thirty-one gunboats and three bomb-ketches, and had armed, officered, and partly manned it. At this time the manufactory of cannon nearest to New York was eighty miles up the Hudson, of small arms at Springfield, Massachusetts, and of gunpowder at Brandywine, Delaware. The gunboats were mounted



with 24's and 32's, and the ketches with smaller guns. All the craft were supplied with muskets, pistols, sabres, pikes, and battle-axes. The flotilla was divided into two fleets of seventeen vessels each. The senior officer of the first division was Lieutenant James Lawrence, and of the second Lieutenant O. H. Perry—names soon to become famous. The flag-boats of the commanders were fitted out with furnaces for heating shot. Practice cruises were made now and then. The headquarters for the flotilla was the New York navy-yard, whose superintendent, Captain Isaac Chauncey, was under the command of Rodgers.

The office of the commodore as commander-in-chief of the New York flotilla and naval station was the most important in the gift of the navy department. His duties, however, while they were quite numerous and varied, were generally trivial and monotonous. The naval officers never liked the gunboat service, regarding it as but little better than soldiering in a garrison. Infrequently the routine of the New York station was interrupted by some striking incident. Early in September, 1807, His Britannic Majesty's frigate "Jason" and brig "Columbine" arrived off New York. Rodgers decided to go down the bay and ask the British commander under what authority these vessels entered our waters, and if a satisfactory answer were not received, compel them to retire. He therefore signaled to five of his gunboats to get under way, and he went aboard one of them and hoisted his broad pennant. Regarding his errand as a delicate one and fearing that he might have misconstrued Jefferson's proclamation forbidding British armed vessels to enter our harbors, he came to anchor off Governor's Island and consulted Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, who informed him

that it was not the president's intention to use force even if the British ships should refuse to leave our waters. The secretary said that it was not advisable for the fleet of gunboats to proceed farther as their movements "might have the appearance of menace." Rodgers therefore waited for orders from the department, but before he received them the British vessels had sailed.

On the organization of the flotilla at New York, naval officers in considerable numbers were for the first time stationed in that city, and some friction between them and certain classes of the citizens arose. The Irish residents and several newspapers manifested their hatred of the navy in insulting ways. The editor of the *Public Advertiser* appears to have been the worst offender. "Why," he asked in his paper, "are the commanders of these gunboats suffered to be swaggering through our streets, while they should be whetting their sabres?" Quick to resent their injuries, the officers chose Lieutenant James Lawrence to reply to the libel, which he did in a letter warm with feeling. After threatening to chastise the offending journalist, he referred specifically to the query quoted above: "In regard to the commanders of gunboats, whom you term 'swaggerers,' I assure you their 'sabres' are sufficiently keen to cut off your ears, and will inevitably be employed in that service if any future remarks injurious to their reputation should be inserted in your paper."

The outraged commanders made preparations to carry out their threats, but were moved to desist by reason of a letter that Rodgers wrote to the mayor of New York complaining of the insults and injuries to which his officers had been subjected. The commanders greatly appreciated the intervention of their commodore, and a committee consisting of Lieutenants James Lawrence,

E. N. Cox, O. H. Perry, and D. T. Patterson wrote him a friendly letter expressive of their gratitude. An extract from Rodgers's reply will show on which side his sympathies lay: "Permit me to inform you that, altho my particular situation forbids my taking an avowed interest with you in chastising the unmerited insults which you had received from the editor of the *Public Advertiser*, my heart not only sanctioned but approved the measures you pursued. The mayor of New York, as you desire, shall be made acquainted with the motives, so highly honorable to you, which produced your forbearance of an infringement of the civil laws in redressing the unjustifiable attack on your characters as officers, and which was evidently intended to render you contemptible in the eyes of the public."

In November, 1807, Rodgers's work at New York was interrupted by a call to duty in connection with the court martial of Commodore James Barron. The secretary of the navy gave him permission to visit his family at Havre de Grace and directed him to remain there until he received further orders. On the nineteenth he turned his fleet over to Captain Isaac Chauncey, and soon proceeded southward by stage. During his absence from home his oldest child, John Henry Rodgers, was born at Sion Hill—"a noble boy," Mrs. Rodgers wrote many years afterwards, "whom I lost when he was thirteen months old." It was at this time that Rodgers received a letter from his good friend Tingey felicitating him on being once more safe at his moorings "alongside of and to the great joy of the good Minerva. I should really be delighted could I come and view you in your novitiate of nursing the darling boy."

On June twenty-third, the day that the "Chesapeake" returned to Hampton Roads, her five lieutenants, Ben-

jamin Smith, W. M. Crane, W. H. Allen, J. O. Creighton, and Sidney Smith, and Sailing-master Samuel Brooke, "feeling deeply sensible of the disgrace which must be attached to the late (in their opinion) premature surrender," wrote a letter to the secretary of the navy requesting him to order a court of enquiry into their conduct. "Compelled by imperious duty, the honor of their flag, the honor of their countrymen, and by all that is dear to themselves," they also asked the secretary to issue an order for the arrest of Commodore James Barron on two charges which they pledged themselves to prove true: "Firstly, on the probability of an engagement for neglecting to clear his ship for action; secondly, for not doing his utmost to take or destroy a vessel, which we conceive it his duty to have done." On June twenty-sixth, the secretary chose the members of a court of enquiry for the trial of Barron—Captains Edward Preble, Isaac Hull, and Isaac Chauncey. Owing to ill health, Preble declined; and his place was taken by Captain Alexander Murray. The court was in session at Norfolk from October fifth until November fourth. Its report was wholly adverse to Barron, who declined to offer a defense. It condemned him for not sooner clearing his ship for action, for the way in which he called his men to quarters, for indecision, inattention to duty, using language tending to dispirit his men, and prematurely surrendering his vessel.

On the receipt of this report the next step of the department in the trial of Barron was the ordering of a court martial. Before this step was taken the first lieutenant of the "Chesapeake," Benjamin Smith, had died of a bilious fever; two of the midshipmen, Broome and Crump, had fought a duel in which one of them was wounded in the thigh; and the executive officer of

the unfortunate vessel, Acting Captain Charles Gordon, had, in accordance with the prevailing code, settled his differences with Doctor Stark and A. J. M'Connico, citizens of Norfolk and friends or relatives of Barron. The dispute between Captain Gordon and Doctor Stark arose from certain remarks made by the doctor reflecting upon the captain's conduct during the engagement. In the preliminary arrangements for the duel it was stipulated that, should one of the principals fire too soon, the second of the other might shoot him. After six shots had been exchanged, the word for the seventh was given. Stark fired prematurely, so Lieutenant W. M. Crane, the second of Gordon, claimed, who, in accordance with the stipulation, shot at the doctor, wounding him in the arm. Stark's second, A. J. M'Connico, denied that his principal had fired improperly. This contention was duly settled by Gordon and M'Connico, and both were wounded. These hostile meetings show something of the feelings aroused by the unfortunate encounter of the two vessels.

On December seventh, Secretary of the Navy Smith issued a warrant to Commodore John Rodgers for the convening of a general court martial to try Commodore James Barron, Master-commandant Charles Gordon, Gunner William Hook, and Captain John Hall of the marines, all late officers of the "Chesapeake." The court consisted of thirteen officers—six captains, three masters-commandant, and four lieutenants—any five of whom were sufficient to form a quorum. The secretary would have included more captains had more been available for duty. Nicholson was incapacitated by age; Murray, Hull, and Chauncey had served on the court of enquiry; Samuel Barron was a brother of the accused officer, and Thomas Tingey was unfriendly to

him. All the remaining captains, Rodgers, Bainbridge, Campbell, Decatur, Stewart, and Shaw were selected. Rodgers, being the senior officer, was the president of the court. David Porter was one of the masters-commandant named, and among the lieutenants were Jacob Jones, James Lawrence, and Charles Ludlow. The Barron court martial was undoubtedly well composed. Its deliberations were dignified, and were in strict accordance with official procedure. In the navy it was always spoken of with respect for its motives and impartiality.

Commodore Stephen Decatur may be thought, however, not to have been wholly unbiased. On December seventeenth, he wrote the following letter to the secretary of the navy: "I cannot in justice to Commodore Barron and my own feelings sit on this court without stating to you my opinion of his case. When the unfortunate affair of the 22nd of June occurred, I formed and expressed an opinion that Commodore Barron had not done his duty. During the court of enquiry I was present when the evidence of the officers was given in. I have since seen the opinion of the court, which opinion I think lenient. It is probable that I am prejudiced against Commodore Barron and view his conduct in this case with more severity than it deserves. Previous to his sailing my opinion of him as a soldier was not favorable. Altho, sir, I hope and trust I should most conscientiously decide on Commodore Barron's case, still, sir, there is no circumstance that would occasion me so much regret as to be compelled to serve on the court martial that tries him. I have therefore to solicit that I may be excused from this duty."

The department overruled Decatur's objections, saying that it had every confidence in his honor and judgment and was satisfied that he would do justice to Bar-

ron and his country. Decatur communicated a copy of his correspondence with the secretary of the navy to Barron's counsel, in order that the commodore might have an opportunity to object to him, but the accused officer did not avail himself of it. Nor did he regard the differences that he had had with Rodgers as sufficient grounds for challenging the president of the court.

On December nineteenth, Rodgers, being then present in the navy department at Washington, received from Secretary Smith the precept for the convening of the court. He then repaired to Norfolk and placed under arrest Commodore James Barron and the other accused officers. The trial of Barron lasted from January 4 to February 6, 1808. It was made the more impressive by being held on board the ill-fated "Chesapeake." The judge advocate was Littleton W. Tazewell, a Norfolk lawyer, who was interested in the navy. The counsel of the prisoner was Robert B. Taylor, esquire, who defended his client with much skill and eloquence. The principal witnesses were the captain, lieutenants, sailing-master, and midshipmen of the "Chesapeake." The testimony of all these officers, with the exception of that of a few midshipmen, was unfavorable to the commodore. Apparently they were disposed to make him bear the brunt of the blame for the disaster.

Barron was tried on four charges: (1) negligently performing the duty assigned him, (2) neglecting on the probability of an engagement to clear his ship for action, (3) failing to encourage in his own person his inferior officers and men to fight courageously, and (4) not doing his utmost to take or destroy the "Leopard," which vessel it was his duty to encounter. The court found him innocent of the first, third, and fourth charges, but guilty of the second. It should be said that the

first charge had reference to the commodore's conduct at Hampton Roads. The court found the prisoner guilty of several specifications under the fourth charge, being of the opinion that he had failed to repel suitably the attack of the "Leopard" and that he had prematurely surrendered his vessel.

Under the second charge considerable evidence was offered tending to prove that the movements of the "Leopard" before she hailed the "Chesapeake" were suspicious and menacing, and that Barron was at fault for not clearing his ship for action before the "Leopard" approached her. The court did not find this evidence conclusive, holding that Barron's acts before the British officer arrived on board his ship were blameless. It, however, appeared to the court that the commodore "did receive from the commanding officer of the 'Leopard' a communication clearly intimating that if certain men were not delivered up to him he should proceed to use force," and that he yet neglected to clear his ship for action. Furthermore, it appeared, from the letters of Barron to the secretary of the navy and from the evidence of witnesses, that the commodore "did verily believe from the communication received from the commanding officer of the said ship 'Leopard' that he would take by force, if they could not be obtained by other means, any British deserters that could be found on board the 'Chesapeake,' and still that the said James Barron neglected to clear his ship for action." In criticism of the court's decision, it should be said that one may reasonably doubt whether the communication received from the British commander intimated that he would use force if the deserters were not given up. Its language may be held to be equivocal. The decision of the court that Barron did verily believe from



the communication that force would be used, is strongly supported by one of his letters to the secretary of the navy. He, however, after writing this letter, denied that such was his belief.

Having found Barron guilty of one of the four charges, the court sentenced him to be suspended from all command in the navy, without pay or official emolument of any kind, for the term of five years from February 8, 1808. It declared, however, that it was absolutely convinced of the "firmness and courage" of the accused officer throughout the action between the two vessels. President Jefferson approved the decision of the court.

Commodore Barron was undoubtedly fully punished for his offense. Whether his sentence was substantially unjust is another question. He was at fault in going to sea with the guns of the "Chesapeake" improperly mounted, her gun-deck lumbered with stores, and her powderhorns empty; in calling his men tardily to quarters; and in surrendering his vessel before she had fired a broadside. On the other hand, much may be said in extenuation of his conduct, and for the view that he was the victim of circumstances. The figure that Barron presents during the two decades succeeding his trial appeals to one's sympathy. He went forth from the court a discredited officer, broken in spirit, feeling acutely his humiliation, and convinced that he had suffered a gross injustice. There will be occasion later to return to the sad sequel of the affair between the "Chesapeake" and the "Leopard" as respects the fortunes of Barron and Decatur.

The cases of the three other accused officers were soon disposed of. Gordon and Hall were found guilty of negligently performing the duty assigned them and

were sentenced to be privately reprimanded by the secretary of the navy. The court, however, considered their offenses very slight, and would gladly have pardoned them had it had the power. The gunner of the "Chesapeake" was found guilty of mounting the guns insecurely, of not filling the powderhorns, and of not properly reporting his work. He was sentenced to be dismissed from the navy. The court adjourned without a day on February 22, 1808.

Soon after the adjournment, Rodgers proceeded northward, stopping at Washington and Havre de Grace. After visiting his family at the latter place he continued his journey to New York, where he arrived about the middle of March. He at once assumed command of his flotilla, relieving Captain Isaac Chauncey. A new use for his vessels had lately arisen.

President Jefferson had now embarked upon his fatuous policy of coercing England and France by means of commercial restrictions. These two nations, which were at this time engaged in a tremendous struggle for supremacy, had begun to despoil neutral commerce, and especially that of the United States. By the winter of 1807-1808, it was no longer safe for American merchantmen to go to sea. Jefferson believed that he could bring the offending nations to terms by refusing to trade with them. He therefore obtained from Congress an embargo prohibiting the departure of our ships from our own ports. The navy and revenue service were called upon to enforce the law. The chief part in this disagreeable task was played by Rodgers at New York, as the commander of the principal naval flotilla. Decatur with his squadron at Norfolk aided in the work, as did other naval officers at less important ports.

The cruising-grounds of Rodgers's vessels were off some of the chief towns and inlets between the Delaware and Passamaquoddy Bays. The cruiser "Revenge" and several gunboats guarded the coast of Long Island and New Jersey and New York harbor. Two of the gunboats were stationed in Passamaquoddy Bay, one at Newburyport, two at Barnstable, one at New Bedford, and one at Newport. Rodgers's officer in command of the Passamaquoddy station found his position exceedingly irksome owing to friction with the British. In spite of the commodore's efforts the embargo was often violated—most often on the New England coast. The illicit traders were wont to sail without a cargo and then clandestinely receive one at some by-port, little frequented bay, or from lighters at sea. Sometimes they escaped detection by cunningly concealing their load beneath the ballast. Now and then a prize was captured, as may be seen from the following incident. One morning after a gale, the commander of "Gunboat No. 6," Lieutenant James Renshaw, discovered a sloop on shore at Sandy Hook. She was loaded with a valuable cargo of tobacco, flour, and salted meats, together with some small articles adapted for the West India market, such as combs, matches, chairs, seals, and keys. Her captain and crew deserted her on the approach of Renshaw, who took possession of his valuable prize.

By no means all of the commodore's time was employed in enforcing the embargo. He superintended the construction of twenty-three gunboats, the last of Jefferson's craft that were built at New York. He overhauled the "Constitution" and the bomb-ketch "Vesuvius." Being now an officer of distinction, he was in much demand on public occasions. In May,

1808, he and his seamen participated in the ceremonies connected with the interment of the patriots that died at Wallabout Bay on board British prison ships during the Revolution. The exercises of the day, which were quite elaborate and included an oration at the tomb, were in charge of the Tammany Society. About this time the commodore became a member of the United States Military Philosophical Society.

The first months of 1809 constitute a turning-point in our naval history. With the retirement of Jefferson from the government, the gunboat policy was abandoned, and "the cockboats or whirligigs of the sage of Monticello" disappeared from view with their promoter. Early in the spring the chief clerk of the navy department, Charles W. Goldsborough, ordered all the gunboats (except those at New Orleans) to be laid up in ordinary. The embargo had failed, and in its place was now substituted nonintercourse with Great Britain and France; with all other countries our vessels were permitted to trade. The enforcement of the new restrictive measure made but small demands upon the navy. The failure of the embargo, our unsettled relations with Great Britain and France, and the continuance of the attacks of these two belligerents on our commerce forced the administration, however, to place almost its entire seagoing navy in commission. Within a few months some three thousand seamen were enlisted and eleven vessels were prepared for sea. These ships with the four that had been used in enforcing the embargo made a considerable fleet. Its largest vessels were the frigates "Constitution," "President," "United States," "Chesapeake," "Essex," and "John Adams."

In the midsummer of 1809, when our foreign affairs had assumed a more peaceful aspect, the navy depart-

ment decided to follow the policy of keeping its ships in commission and of sending them on practice cruises. For this decision credit must be given to Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton and Chief Clerk Charles W. Goldsborough. From 1809 until 1812 the larger part of our seagoing navy was engaged in cruising off the Atlantic coast and in carrying dispatches abroad. The valuable training that our officers and seamen thus obtained was one of the principal causes of their signal success in the War of 1812. During these years not a few of the young commanders who won great distinction in the war served under Commodores Rodgers and Decatur and received from these two veterans in the service an invaluable professional training.

The early part of the winter of 1808-1809, Rodgers spent at Washington, whither he had been called from New York to act as president of a court of enquiry convened to inquire into the conduct of Commodore Thomas Tingey, the commandant of the Washington navy-yard, who had been charged with various misdemeanors by his purser. Rodgers had the satisfaction of seeing his friend exonerated. On the completion of this duty he was granted a brief furlough to visit his family at Havre de Grace. Here early in February, 1809, he received orders to proceed to New York and prepare the "Constitution" for sea. He arrived at his station about the middle of the month. In the spring and early summer, in addition to the "Constitution," there were at New York under his command the "Siren," Master-commandant Charles Gordon; "Vixen," Lieutenant Charles Ludlow; "Argus," Lieutenant O. H. Perry; and "Wasp," Lieutenant James Lawrence; all of which vessels were being fitted out for sea. An agreeable duty that fell to the commodore at this time was the

dismantling and laying up at New York of fifty-two gunboats.

The "Constitution" weighed anchor on her first cruise of instruction and observation on August 15, 1809. After visiting Newport and New London she returned to New York. On September eighth, she again went to sea, this time in company with the "Essex" and "Argus." Two days later she had the misfortune to lose several masts and yards, and a seaman stationed at the mast-head was killed. This accident was not caused by heavy weather, as the wind was light at the time, but by the poor quality of the wood used in the construction of the spars. Returning to port, Rodgers soon sailed for Hampton Roads for repairs. By the middle of November, 1809, the "Constitution" was once more at New York, where she remained during the ensuing winter. In the spring of 1810, she was again at sea, and off Sandy Hook she captured the ships "Golconda" of New York and "Rose" of Philadelphia for violating the nonintercourse act. These vessels had sailed from Liverpool and were laden with English manufactures.

In January, 1810, Rodgers was called to Washington to preside over a board, composed of himself and Captains Tingey and Chauncey, and convened to consider the best methods for repairing the frigates "Congress," "Constellation," "New York," and "Adams," which were lying in ordinary at the Washington yard. The convening of this board is one of several indications that the navy was awakening from the lethargy that had fallen over it during the last administration of Jefferson. Rodgers was at this time interested in the creation of a permanent board of navy commissioners, in the establishment of naval hospitals, and in several other measures of naval reform and betterment. He set forth

his views at length on a system for dockyards and everything connected with the equipment of ships. Secretary of the Navy Hamilton, who had a high regard for the commodore's professional ability, was favorably impressed with his observations on these subjects.

The questions of naval discipline that Rodgers was called upon to deal with during these years of peace were not especially important. Now and then a young officer guilty of intoxication or other improprieties was permitted to resign from the navy. Too often the commodore's young midshipmen, over sensitive as to points of honor while suffering from some trivial or imaginary offense, maintained their professional reputation with appropriate weapons and bled in vindication of their pride. On one occasion Midshipman Redick entered the mess-room of his vessel at dinner time with his hat on; thereupon Midshipman Barrymore exclaimed "Damn you, Redick, take off your hat!" To this the offending youth observed, "Barrymore you have often taken improper liberties with me, and I therefore wish to have nothing further to do with you." Barrymore insisted that these words be explained. A hostile meeting, in proper form, took place in an orchard about a mile from the New York navy-yard. One of the principals was wounded in the hip; the other escaped injury. On another occasion Midshipman Danielson, a stepson of General William Eaton, fought Midshipman Schuyler for no good reason that was ever assigned. Having repaired to the dueling grounds they went through the forms from motives of bravado, since they were ashamed to return without fighting. Danielson was shot through the heart, and Schuyler absconded into New Jersey. In 1810, Midshipman Mor-

gan killed Midshipman Rodgers in a duel. Morgan was badly wounded. His second was Midshipman Hamilton, a son of the secretary of the navy.

In cases of this sort Rodgers, with a view (as he said) "to discourage a practice so much at variance with morality and the common law of the country," ordered the arrest and the suspension from duty of the seconds and the surviving principal or principals. Since the laws of the navy did not punish dueling and the naval customs upheld it, the offending officers were usually after a brief confinement released and restored to duty. In this connection it is a pleasure to record that in 1807, six of Rodgers's lieutenants, headed by Lawrence and Perry, submitted to him a plan for a "Court of Honor" designed to prevent dueling in the navy. The character of the court may be seen from the following provision: "In every contest between officers of whatever nature it may be, the party aggrieved shall be obliged to lay the circumstances before the court for their investigation and decision." What action was taken on the lieutenant's plan is not known.

In 1810, Robert Fulton, the celebrated inventor and engineer, published a work on torpedo war and submarine explosions, in which he argued that his newly-invented torpedoes were destined to supersede navies as a form of national defense. These claims aroused the ire of Rodgers who naturally held a brief for his profession. He rightly regarded them as highly extravagant. In his opinion the navy was in danger of being inflicted with a torpedo heresy that would prove as disastrous to it as Jefferson's gunboat heresy. He therefore wrote and spoke most spiritedly against Fulton's invention, declaring that it was defective in principle and futile in practice as far as ships of war were



concerned. He claimed to be able by a few minutes' work to render a vessel absolutely proof against torpedoes, and he declared that he would be as safe upon a vessel thus prepared for defense as a "Spaniard believes himself to be in his sanctuary or a Turk does in his mosque during the service of the alcoran." The commodore naturally did not foresee the future of torpedoes, nor did he at this time do justice to the character and genius of Fulton, whom he (and in this he was not alone) was inclined to regard as a visionary charlatan.

In this connection one may quote Rodgers's account of a conversation which he had in the spring of 1810 with one of Napoleon's great generals, who was exiled to America for conspiring against his master:

"I dined in company with General Moreau a few days since, who gave me the history of Fulton's proposing the scheme [respecting torpedoes] to Bonaparte, with the opinions and conduct of the latter on the subject. I asked, moreover, if he had read Fulton's book, and his reply was, 'No,' that he would not read such nonsense. General Moreau is too communicative, I think, to be that extraordinary great man which he is generally considered. He denies that the world has produced an honest man since the birth of Adam; that between nations, according to his maxims, might constitutes right; and that nations as well as individuals are justified in practicing deceptions of any kind and in any way for their own benefit. He observed that, if Mr. Fulton could so far deceive Congress as to obtain fifteen or twenty thousand dollars for nothing, he was justified in so doing. These are not sentiments which a great man would expose to the world, whatever he might think on such subjects. Some allowance, however, is to

be made for General Moreau's being a Frenchman. These sentiments accord exactly with the account which the history of the French Revolution gives of this denunciation of his friend Pichegru to the Directors."

Moreau's observation in respect to the deceiving of Congress has reference to Fulton's application to that body for an appropriation to try his torpedoes. In March, 1810, Fulton was voted five thousand dollars for that purpose. The navy department appointed a committee of distinguished citizens, among whom were Oliver Wolcott and Chancellor Livingston, to witness the test. It also requested Commodore Rodgers and Captain Chauncey to attend it and to conduct the defense against the torpedoes. The place selected for the trial was the East River, opposite Corlear's Hook, in New York Harbor. The vessel chosen was the brig "Argus," and the officer to make the preparations, Lieutenant James Lawrence. He borrowed the splinter-net of the frigate "President" (an article designed to catch wooden splinters during an action), hung it around the brig at the end of some extra spars, and weighted it with grapnels and kentledge. Lawrence was only fifteen minutes in making the defense. Fulton acknowledged that his torpedoes could not penetrate the net, and he asked for time to design a machine that would do so. This was to consist of a combination of knives and was to be fired from a gun. The time was granted, but Fulton failed to make good, and the committee reported adversely to his invention. In transmitting an account of the experiments to the secretary of the navy, Rodgers wrote as follows: "You will recollect, sir, that Mr. Fulton has exerted himself to impose a belief on the minds of the citizens of the United States that his project was calculated to supersede the necessi-

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ty of a navy, and that under these expectations much was anticipated from the experiments which were authorized to be made at this place; yet that nothing has been done farther than what serves to demonstrate that he has not only deceived himself by such an unqualified assertion, but every other individual who has placed any reliance in his scheme of offensive and defensive war as described in his book entitled 'Torpedo War.'"



## IX. THE "PRESIDENT" AND "LITTLE BELT": 1810-1811<sup>24</sup>

LATE in May, 1810, after a brief cruise on the Atlantic coast, Commodore Rodgers arrived at Annapolis with the "Constitution," "Argus," and "Wasp." From that place he soon proceeded to Washington to confer with the secretary of the navy, who was about to make new arrangements for the fleet. These had been rendered necessary by the expiration on May first of the Nonintercourse Act and the passage on the same day of Macon's Bill No. 10, which prohibited the entrance into our waters of all British and French armed vessels, except official packets and such ships as might be forced into port by distress or accident. Moreover, the navy department, no longer dominated by Jefferson and his policy of nonresistance, now manifested a strong disposition to protect American interests, redress past injuries, and prepare for any emergency. Madison's secretary of the navy, Paul Hamilton of South Carolina, was a sober dignified gentleman of the old school, ardently patriotic after the fashion of 1776. He was disposed to resist by force any insults offered to our seamen and commerce. In the early summer of 1810, he reorganized the fleet and issued new orders to the commanders in conformity with the new naval policy of resistance to aggression. He gave to Rodgers the prin-

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<sup>24</sup> This chapter is based chiefly on the Rodgers Papers, the official letters of the navy department, the correspondence relating to the "Little Belt," printed in the *American State Papers*, "Foreign Relations," vol. iii, 471-499, and the log of the "Little Belt." See also Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, vol. vi, chap. ii, and the *London Times*, Dec. 7, 1811.

cial command, "the northern division of ships for the protection of the American coast." Decatur received the command of the southern division. His rendezvous was Norfolk, and Rodgers's New York. In addition to the two chief squadrons, small flotillas were maintained at Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans.

Rodgers's division as organized late in the summer of 1810 consisted of his flag-ship "President," 44, Master-commandant Charles Ludlow; frigate "Constitution," 44, Captain Isaac Hull; brig "Argus," 18, Lieutenant James Lawrence; and also schooner "Revenge," 12, Lieutenant O. H. Perry. Always fortunate in his choice of officers, Rodgers was especially so at this time. A more brilliant naval trio than Hull, Lawrence, and Perry was not to be found. Ludlow, who resigned from the navy in 1811, was as highly regarded as his three colleagues. The lieutenants of the "President," J. O. Creighton, R. H. J. Perry, Thomas Gamble, and A. J. Dallas, were excellent officers. Three of her midshipmen, Matthew C. Perry, Joseph Smith, and Silas Stringham, rose to the highest rank in the navy and achieved great professional honors.

On being offered his choice of flag-ship, Rodgers preferred the "President" to her sister frigate, the "Constitution." The "President" was built at New York in 1800 by Forman Cheeseman, naval constructor. Her measurements were as follows: length of gun-deck 175 feet, breadth of beam 43.6 feet, depth of hold 14.3 feet, length of main-yard 92 feet, and length of maintopmast 58 feet. Her burden was 1444 tons. She mounted fifty-eight guns; thirty-two long 24-pounders on her main deck; sixteen 42-pound carronades on her quarter-deck; and eight 42-pound carronades, and two long 24's as chase guns, on her forecastle. It is said

that the lines of the "President" were finer, her scantling heavier, and her spars proportionately longer and thicker than those of any British ship of equal or even superior rate. Her sides were twenty inches thick, while the sides of the seventy-four gun ship "Hero" of the Royal Navy were only nineteen inches thick. Rodgers took command of the "President" on June 17, 1810, at Hampton Roads, exchanging vessels, officers, and crews with Captain Hull. Pending the completion of the new arrangements of the secretary of the navy, the commodore made a cruise northward to New York and eastward as far as the latitude of Passamaquoddy Bay, returning to Hampton Roads on July sixteenth.

Rodgers's new duties are set forth in several orders of the department issued in June and July, 1810. He was to protect our merchantmen within a league of the coast from molestation by British or French ships. He was to seize all private armed vessels that were illegally fitted out in our ports, wherever found. He was to report all American citizens detected in assisting or supplying foreign armed ships. When called upon he was to aid the collector of a port in compelling armed vessels to depart from our waters. On meeting foreign ships of war, he was to govern his conduct by the following general directions of Secretary Hamilton, dated June 9, 1810:

[As in] "the arrangement of our navy according to my orders of the 5th instant authorizing operations on somewhat of an extended scale it is probable that in your cruising you may meet with foreign ships of war, it is proper that I give you a short exposition of my sentiments on this occasion, which you are to take as general orders and communicate them to the officers and seamen under your command. You like every other

patriotic American have observed and deeply feel the injuries and insults heaped on our country by the two great belligerents of Europe, and you must also believe that (calculating by the past) from neither are we to expect either liberality or justice; but on the contrary no opportunity will be lost of adding to the outrages to which for years we have been subjected. Amongst these stand most conspicuous the inhuman and dastardly attack on our frigate 'Chesapeake'—an outrage which prostrated the flag of our country and has imposed on the American people cause of ceaseless mourning. That same spirit which originated and has refused atonement for this act of brutal injustice exists still with Great Britain; and from France likewise we have no reason to expect any regard for our rights. What has been perpetrated, may again be attempted; it is therefore our duty to be prepared and determined at every hazard to vindicate the injured honor of our navy and revive the drooping spirits of the nation. Influenced by these considerations, it is expected that while you conduct the force under your command consistently with the principles of a strict and upright neutrality, you are to maintain and support at any risk and cost the dignity of your flag; and that offering, yourself, no unjust aggression, you are to submit to none—not even a menace or threat from a force not materially your superior. Appreciating as I do your good sense and honorable feeling, it is unnecessary for me to be more particular on this topic. I will therefore only add that, relying on your patriotism and valor, I offer you my best wishes for your honor, prosperity, and happiness."

These fervid expressions of patriotism and righteous indignation met with a hearty response in the breast of



every officer of the navy. On receiving them Rodgers wrote to Hamilton that he highly appreciated the motive that had produced them. He agreed with his superior that the attack on the "Chesapeake" was as "dastardly as it was inhuman and unjust, and altho it has not taught us the commission of insults, it has nevertheless (I am satisfied) not learned us to submit to them. I therefore flatter myself, sir, that should a similar indignity be again offered to our flag by any force that is not vastly our superior, England will have no just reason to triumph at the result. Under these considerations, and with this view of the subject, I shall agreeably to your orders conduct the force, which you have been pleased to place under my command, consistently with the principles of strict neutrality, at the same time I hope in a manner that will give our already much injured country no cause to blush should the exercise of that disposition not meet a similar return."

In accordance with his orders, the commodore sent each of his commanders a copy of Hamilton's short exposition, to which he added a few words of his own: "I have only to observe, that in the event of such indignities being offered to our flag as to which the foregoing transcript from the Honorable the Secretary's letter alludes (and which I consider as being far from impossible), much will be expected of us; as in case of such an occurrence, every man, woman, and child in our country that is capable of distinguishing meritorious conduct from that of a different character will be disposed to examine into our actions with jealous and scrutinizing eyes, equally ready to applaud those calculated to do honor to our insulted country, as they will be active in consigning our names to disgrace and even the very vessels composing at present our little navy

to the ravages of the worms or the detestable transmigration to merchantmen, should we not fulfil their expectations. Circumstanced as we are with the two great European belligerents of Europe (and particularly England) I should consider the firing of a shot by a vessel of war of either nation at one of our public vessels, whilst the colors of her nation are flying on board of her, as a menace of the grossest order, and in amount an insult which it would be disgraceful not to resent by the return of two shots at least. And that under similar circumstances, should a shot be fired at one of our vessels and strike any part of her, it ought to be considered an act of hostility meriting chastisement to the utmost of all your force."

These spirited communications show that the secretary of the navy and his commanders were no longer in a mood to submit patiently to injuries committed by the ships of Great Britain and France. They were disposed to welcome an opportunity to revenge the humiliation of the "Chesapeake." They, however, expressed their intention to maintain a strict neutrality, to use force only to repel force, to fire when fired upon. That the navy was determined not to be the aggressor is indicated by the fact that it acted under the foregoing orders for a year before a hostile encounter took place. Moreover, on at least one occasion a naval vessel under great provocation showed a most peaceable spirit. On June 24, 1810, the brig "Vixen," Lieutenant John Trippe, on a voyage to New Orleans fell in with His Britannic Majesty's brig "Moselle" and was fired upon by the British vessel. One shot passed over the quarter-deck of the "Vixen" and carried away her mainboom. Trippe did not return the fire; and he accepted an apology, which, under the circumstances attending the out-

rage, was lamentably weak. The commander of the "Moselle" said that he mistook the American vessel for a French one and that the shot which carried away the mainboom of the "Vixen" was not intended.

Acting under his new orders, Rodgers on June twentieth seized at Hampton Roads the French privateer schooner "*Revanche du Cerf*," Captain Jean Jacques Bonne, mounting four guns and carrying forty-nine men. In April, this privateer had put into Charleston, South Carolina, in distress. After refitting, she sailed ostensibly for France. She proceeded, however, directly to the Gulf of Mexico, where she fell in with and captured two Spanish ships, taking out of them all their valuables before releasing them. She then returned to the Atlantic, and, running out of water and provisions, came into Hampton Roads to replenish her supplies, falsely alleging that she had lost some of her spars off Cape Henry. It was rumored that she had fired into one of our coasting vessels. The case of her capture was referred to the United States district court at Richmond, Virginia. What disposition was made of her by the court is not known.

Early in August the vessels of the commodore's fleet proceeded to their stations. The "Argus" made her headquarters at Boston and cruised from Eastport, Maine, to the South Shoal of Nantucket. The cruising grounds of the "Revenge" extended from the southern limits given above to Montauk Point, and her rendezvous was Newport. The "President's" station lay between Montauk Point and Cape May, and her rendezvous was New York. The "Constitution" had her rendezvous at Newcastle and she cruised between Cape May and Cape Henry. With the details of the operations of the commodore's fleet this narrative is not con-

cerned. The movements of the "President," however, will be illustrated by a few extracts from her journal:

"Aug. 12: At six p.m. discovered a sail in the N.W., having the appearance of a small vessel of war, made sail and gave chase. At half past six, supposing the chase to be the 'Revenge,' made the 'Revenge's' signal, at which time she made a signal consisting of three flags and hoisted English colors; and shortly after she bore up and stood for us and at the distance of about two gun-shots to windward of us, finding we were not English (which from her maneuvers I judge she had mistaken us for), she hauled her wind and made sail from us, but at half past seven, finding we were coming up with her very fast she bore up. At eight spoke her and discovered her to be His British Majesty's schooner 'Vesta' on a cruise. At two a.m. sounded in forty fathoms' water. At eight sounded in twenty-two fathoms' water, at which time from the whitish appearance of the water I judged that we were near the South Shoal of Nantucket, but it being extremely foggy saw nothing of it.

"Aug. 16. At one p.m. spoke an English schooner from New Providence, thirteen days out bound to Halifax. From midnight to meridian, fresh breezes and clear pleasant weather. At half past eleven a.m. discovered a sail in the N.W., and sent up topgallant yards, made sail and gave chase.

"Aug. 17. Variable winds and pleasant weather, all sail set in chase. At half past five p.m. came up with and spoke the chase, which proved to be the ship 'Union' of Providence (R.I.), four days from New York bound for Liverpool.

"Aug. 19. At half past five a.m. in twenty-one fathoms' water, Sandy Hook bearing N.W., distant nine or

ten leagues, spoke His British Majesty's schooner 'Vesta' on a cruise. At ten a.m. the weather assuming a very unsettled appearance and the wind being E.S.E. tacked to the S.S.E. At meridian the schooner 'Vesta' still in sight.

"Aug. 20. At half past five a.m. discovered three sail in the E.N.E., made sail and gave chase. At six spoke a schooner from Boston bound to Norfolk. At a quarter past six a second vessel of the chase hoisted English colors and proved to be the 'Vesta' which we had spoken the day before. At eight spoke the third vessel of the chase, which proved to be the ship 'Huntress' of and bound to New York, thirty-seven days from Madeira.

"Aug. 22. At half past six a.m., being in twenty-five fathoms' water, discovered a strange sail to windward bearing S.S.W. At seven hauled up in a direction to intersect the line of her course. At nine a.m. the before-mentioned sail hoisted English colors. At eleven discovered her to be a frigate, cleared ship for action and gave chase. At meridian the chase being about two leagues to windward beat to quarters.

"Aug. 23. At half past two let one reef out of top-sails and set top-gallant sails. At a quarter past three the chase tacked. At half past three tacked in pursuit of the chase. At four the chase hove to, and it shortly after falling calm, a boat was sent from her to inform me that she was His Britannic Majesty's frigate 'Venus,' commanded by Captain Crawford bound to New York, and that the object of her mission was to land Mr. Morier, as minister resident in the place of Mr. Jackson who was to return to England in the same frigate. At half past five beat a retreat and secured the guns. At sunset the Highlands of Neversink bore N.W. by N.  $\frac{1}{2}$  N., distant eight or nine leagues. At nine a.m. received

a pilot on board and anchored outside of Sandy Hook Bar.

"Aug. 24. At half past nine a.m. discovered the national schooner 'Vesta' in the act of boarding a ship, about four or five leagues from the land, weighed and gave chase, at which instant she made all sail and stood to the E.N.E. At three quarters past ten tacked for the purpose of speaking the ship that the 'Vesta' had boarded, and which proved to be the Spanish ship 'Oceana,' fifty-four days from Liverpool. The master of the 'Oceana' informed me that the 'Vesta' had impressed a seaman from him (by birth a Spaniard), but, after taking him on board and discovering that he was an invalid, returned him again.

"Aug. 25. At one p.m. made sail and stood in for the bar. At three passed the British national brig 'Snap' (commanded by Lieutenant Barclay and said to be charged with dispatches) lying at anchor inside of Sandy Hook. At half past five p.m. anchored in seven fathoms' water in a direction between the Battery and Pouler's Hook.

"Aug. 25 to Aug. 31, civil time. Nothing occurred worthy of remark further than that the U.S. brig 'Argus,' Lieutenant James Lawrence, commander, arrived on the 30th from a cruise in Boston bay; and that the U.S. schooner 'Revenge,' commanded by Lieutenant O. H. Perry, sailed for Newport, her rendezvous, on the 31st."

The ships of Rodgers's squadron spent the fall of 1810 alternately cruising on their stations and refitting in port. About the middle of December they all arrived at New London, their winter quarters. The three succeeding months were not especially eventful to the commodore. That his young officers might be usefully

employed and be kept from mischief, he ordered a survey of Gardiner's Bay and the harbors of Newport and New London to be made. These were among the very first surveying duties performed by our naval officers. While the "Revenge" was engaged in this work she ran aground and was lost. A court of enquiry that investigated the cause of the accident decided that the commander of the vessel, Lieutenant O. H. Perry, was blameless. The monotony of the winter was further broken by a duel between two midshipmen of the "Constitution." The hostile meeting was held about fifteen miles from New London, and resulted in the death of one of the principals, Charles L. Fowle. Late in February, 1811, the commodore visited Newport to ascertain the fitness of the frigate "John Adams" for a European voyage.

The rendezvous at New London was broken up on March twentieth, when the "President" sailed for New York and the "Constitution" for Boston. On April twenty-second, Rodgers left New York for a brief practice cruise on his station, with permission to touch at Annapolis and to spend a few days visiting his family at Havre de Grace and transacting some private business at Baltimore. After cruising eight days between Sandy Hook and the Chesapeake, during which time he saw no foreign ships of war, he sailed for Annapolis, where he arrived on May second. Some two or three days later he went to Havre de Grace. Here on May eighth, he received the following order from Secretary Hamilton: "I am informed that the trade of New York is now interrupted by British and French cruisers off that port. You will therefore resume your station at New York and proceed to execute my orders for the protection of the commerce of the United States." A similar

order was sent to Lieutenant James Lawrence, of the "Argus," which vessel also was at Annapolis. These communications of the secretary of the navy were plain, brief statements ordering the commanders to return to their stations and resume their duties. The one addressed to Rodgers was dated May sixth and was first sent to Annapolis, since Hamilton supposed that the commodore was still at that place. From Annapolis it was taken to Havre de Grace by Midshipman M. C. Perry in the gig of the "President." It was issued partly, or possibly entirely, as the result of the impressment on board a British ship of an American citizen. Soon after Rodgers left New York two British naval vessels appeared off that port. On May first one of them, the frigate "Guerrière," overhauled the American merchant brig "Spitfire" and took from her John Diggio, an apprentice to the master of the brig and a native of Maine.

On receiving Hamilton's order Rodgers, on May eighth, wrote to the secretary that he would leave Havre de Grace on the next day and would proceed to his station without a moment's delay. He reached his ship on the afternoon of the ninth, and sailed on the tenth. Owing to head winds, he did not get to sea until about 6 p.m. of the fourteenth. His vessel was in perfect order and in most respects ready for action at a moment's notice. Indeed, since the "Chesapeake"- "Leopard" affair none of our naval vessels went to sea without a supply of cartridges on deck, powderhorns filled, and matches or locks in trim. Nor did its commander permit a ship of war to approach without clearing his vessel for action and sending his men to quarters. At Annapolis Rodgers read an account of the impressment of Diggio. This information caused him to take addi-



Havre de Grace  
8<sup>th</sup> May 1811

Sir

I this moment received your  
letter of the 6<sup>th</sup> Inst; and in obedience  
to its contents shall leave here tomorrow  
morning for Annapolis, and from there  
proceed to my station at New York  
without a moment's delay

With great respect  
I have the honor to be

Your Obedt<sup>l</sup> Servt

Sir York Pitt Rivers

Paul Hamilton John Rodgers  
Secretary of the Navy  
Washington

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER OF COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS, 1811  
Addressed to Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton, dated Havre de Grace  
(Maryland), May 8, 1811. From the archives of the United States Navy  
Department, Washington, D.C.



tional precautions in preparing his ship for any emergency. The hasty departure of the "President" from port and the bustle on board her greatly aroused the interest and curiosity of her officers and crew.<sup>25</sup>

At half-past twelve o'clock in the afternoon of the sixteenth, being then about forty-five miles northeastward of Cape Henry, the commodore discovered a vessel in the east-southeast standing towards him under a heavy press of sail. She later proved to be His Britannic Majesty's sloop of war "Little Belt," 20 guns, Captain Arthur Batt Bingham. She had discovered the "President" at 11:30 a.m. and had made all sail in chase. By 1:30 p.m. Rodgers, being able to fix the character of the approaching vessel by the symmetry of her sails, decided that she was a ship of war. He now hoisted his pennant and ensign. Both vessels cleared for action and sent their men to quarters. At about 2:30 p.m. the "Little Belt," finding that her signals were not answered and discovering that the vessel she was chasing was an American frigate, bore up, wore ship, and stood to the southward, at the same time showing her colors, which however were not seen by the "President."

Rodgers now concluded that in all probability the strange ship was the "Guerrière," not having heard that other British vessels were on our coast. As it was his duty to ascertain the name and character of the retreating ship, he decided to overhaul her. He thought that possibly, if she proved to be the "Guerrière," he might be able to procure the release of Diggio. At this time it was customary for ships of war to chase and speak

<sup>25</sup> There is a letter (see the *New York Herald* for June 3, 1811) that purports to have been written by an officer on board the "President," off Cape Henry, on May 14, 1811. It is inaccurate in many of its details. The *Herald* for June 8 declares that it is utterly false.

each other on the high seas, and to do so was not considered an unfriendly act. Under his present orders, as we have seen, Rodgers had frequently chased and spoken British naval vessels.

By half-past three in the afternoon the "President" had gained sufficiently on the chase to bring into view the upper part of her stern. About this time the wind became light, and the "President's" rate of approach was reduced. At 4 p.m. the two vessels, according to the American account, were still thirteen miles apart. At 5 p.m. the "Little Belt" beat to quarters; and at 7:30 p.m., since the American ship was now rapidly gaining on her, she shortened sail, hove to, hoisted her colors, and double-shotted her guns. At this time, according to her log, she was "all clear for action." Her flag was now for the first time seen on board the "President," but its nationality could not be discerned owing to the gathering twilight. On each ship the guns were loaded and ready to do execution, the men were at their quarters anxious and attentive, and the officers were on deck eagerly watchful of their duties. Each commander had taken precautions to prevent accidents. Rodgers's orders were not to fire unless fired upon. The locks of some of his cannon were half-cocked. The sun had set, and the dusk was fading into darkness. Under these circumstances, a gun was likely to discharge itself, so to speak, on either or both of the vessels.

At about a quarter of eight, when the ships were a mile and a half from each other, Rodgers ordered his captain to take a position to the windward of the "Little Belt," on the same tack with her, and within short speaking distance. As this would give the American captain the weather-gauge, Bingham maneuvered his vessel for half an hour with a view to keeping his advan-

tage. Finally about 8:30 p.m. the "President" succeeded in her object and rounded to on the weather beam of the "Little Belt," some two or three hundred feet distant. The two captains now hailed each other almost simultaneously, asking, "What ship is that?" Neither one replied. Each repeated his hail.

The account of the succeeding events as related by Rodgers and Bingham differs in several essential particulars. These differences will be considered in another connection. As the narrative of the American captain is more detailed than that of the British, is better supported by evidence, and is more probable, it will be followed:

"I reiterated my first enquiry of 'What ship is that?' and before I had time to take the trumpet from my mouth was answered by a shot that cut off one of our main-topmast breast-backstays and went into our mainmast. At this instant Captain Caldwell of marines, who was standing very near to me on the gangway, having observed 'Sir, she has fired at us' caused me to pause for a moment just as I was in the act of giving an order to fire a shot in return, and before I had time to resume the repetition of the intended order, a shot was actually fired from the second division of this ship, and was scarcely out of the gun before it was answered from our assumed enemy by three others in quick succession, and soon after by the rest of his broadside and musketry. When the first shot was fired, being under an impression that it might possibly have proceeded from accident and without the orders of the commander, I had determined at the moment to fire only a single shot in return, but the immediate repetition of the previous unprovoked outrage induced me to believe that the insult was premeditated, and that from our adversary's being

at the time as ignorant of our real force as I was of his, he thought this perhaps a favorable opportunity of acquiring promotion, altho at the expense of violating our neutrality and insulting our flag.

"I accordingly, with that degree of repugnance incident to feeling equally determined neither to be the aggressor nor to suffer the flag of my country to be insulted with impunity, gave a general order to fire, the effect of which in from four to six minutes, as near as I can judge, having produced a partial silence of his guns, I gave orders to cease firing, discovering by the feeble opposition that it must be a ship of very inferior force to what I had supposed, or that some untoward accident had happened to her. My orders in this instance, however, altho they proceeded alone from motives of humanity and a determination not to spill a drop of blood unnecessarily, I had in less than four minutes some reason to regret, as he renewed his fire, of which two 32-pound shot cut off one of our fore-shrouds and injured our foremast. It was now that I found myself under the painful necessity of giving orders for a repetition of our fire against a force which my forbearance alone had enabled to do us any injury of moment. Our fire was accordingly renewed and continued from three to five minutes longer, when perceiving our opponent's gaffs and colors down, his main-topsail yard upon the cap, and his fire silenced, altho it was so dark that I could not discern any other particular injury we had done, or how far he was in a situation to do us further harm, I nevertheless embraced the earliest moment to stop our fire and prevent the further effusion of blood.

"Here a pause of half a minute took place, at the end of which our adversary not showing a further disposition to fire, I hailed again and asked, 'What ship is

that?' and learnt for the first time that it was a ship of His Britannic Majesty, but owing to its blowing rather fresher than it had done, I was unable to learn her name. After having informed her commander of the name of this ship, I gave orders to wear, run under his lee, haul by the wind on the starboard tack, heave to under top-sails, and repair what little injury we had sustained in our rigging, etc., which was accordingly executed; and we continued lying to on different tacks with a number of lights displayed, in order that our adversary might the better discern our position and command our assistance in case he found it necessary during the night."<sup>26</sup>

At daylight on the seventeenth the British ship was to be seen about seven miles to the leeward of the "President." At 8 a.m., Rodgers ran down under easy sail, hailed the "Little Belt," and sent a boat aboard her under Lieutenant J. O. Creighton, with orders to learn her name and that of her commander, to express to him the commodore's regrets at the occurrence and to offer him assistance in repairing his ship's injuries. In about an hour Creighton returned with the desired information and with a polite message from Bingham who declined the proffered aid. Rodgers now for the first time learned the name of the vessel that he had engaged and that she was only about half the force of the "President." The "Little Belt" was rated as a 20-gun sloop of war. However, owing to her great length, her having a poop, topgallants, and forecastle, and the manner in which her hammocks were stored, she was easily mistaken for a two-decker—especially by one who, like Rodgers, had no view of her broadside in daylight. She

<sup>26</sup> Rodgers Papers, John Rodgers to Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton, May 23, 1811.

was a Danish built vessel and had been captured by the British at Copenhagen.

In so one-sided a contest it was inevitable that the weaker ship should fare the worse, but that she should fail so completely to inflict serious damage upon her antagonist was not to have been expected. The "Little Belt" lost thirteen men killed, including a midshipman and a lieutenant of marines, and nineteen wounded, among whom were the acting master and a lieutenant of marines. The "President" had a boy wounded, the only loss that she suffered. The spars, sails, and rigging of the sloop were shattered; her upper works and her starboard pump were shot away; and she received many shots between wind and water, which, passing through her sides, did much damage to her interior furnishings. The "President" was hit by two 32-pound balls, one of which lodged in her mainmast and the other in her foremast. With these exceptions, her injuries were slight.

After communicating with Captain Bingham on the morning of May seventeenth, Rodgers sailed for New York. As soon as the "Little Belt" had repaired her injuries sufficiently to return to port, she proceeded to Halifax. The commodore arrived off Sandy Hook on the twenty-third, and at once dispatched his captain of marines to the secretary of the navy at Washington with an official account of the engagement, from which we have quoted above. In this document he expressed deep regret at the loss of life on board the British vessel, which, he said, would cause him the most acute pain during the remainder of his life, had he not the consolation to know that there was no alternative left him between such a sacrifice and one which would have been still greater: namely, to have remained a passive spec-



tator of insult to the flag of his country whilst it was confided to his protection. "And I would have you to be convinced, sir," he continued, "that, however much individually I may previously had reason to feel incensed at the repeated outrages committed on our flag by British ships of war, neither my passions nor prejudices had any agency in this affair. To my country, I am well convinced of the importance of the transaction which has imposed upon me the necessity of making you this communication. I must therefore from motives of delicacy connected with personal considerations solicit that you will be pleased to request the President to authorize a formal enquiry to be instituted into all the circumstances as well as into every part of my conduct connected with the same." Rodgers from the first courted the fullest and most candid investigation of the causes and circumstances of the engagement.

Secretary Hamilton was highly pleased with the action between the two ships and the success of the American arms. An amusing story was told at the time that the secretary on receiving the news of the fight fell into a rapture, kissed his wife and children, and exclaimed "Thank God, the attack upon the 'Chesapeake' is now equalled." Concerning the boy that was wounded on board the "President," the secretary wrote to Rodgers thus: "If in addition to his gallantry he is of good character generally, I would hug him to my bosom (whatever may be his condition or circumstances in life) while I made him an officer in the American navy." The boy was given a midshipman's warrant. His name was Walter Rodgers, and his father had been a Revolutionary officer. It would be a pleasure to record that Midshipman Rodgers rose to high rank and was an honor to the service. Unfortunately his career

as a naval officer was cut short by his misconduct. In 1812, Commodore Rodgers permitted him to resign from the navy, writing to Hamilton at the time that the service would do well to rid itself of him.

Both Secretary Hamilton and President Madison cordially approved the commodore's conduct. "I declare that my sentiments towards and estimation of you," the secretary wrote to Rodgers, "go beyond what may be expressed by the words 'esteem' and 'respect'." On May twenty-eighth, he wrote: "Attacked as you were, you could have pursued no other course than that which you adopted, consistently with your duty. In supporting properly the honor of the flag committed to your protection, it is pleasing to perceive that you were not unmindful of the dictates of humanity. You ceased your fire the moment that your country's and your own honor permitted you to do so. The president thus viewing your conduct has authorized me to convey to you his unqualified approbation; and deeming it unnecessary to institute any further investigation, your request to have a court of enquiry appointed on the occasion cannot at this time be acceded to with propriety." Rodgers reluctantly acquiesced in the president's decision not to order an investigation. The instituting of a court to inquire into all the facts of the engagement, he said, would have been much more gratifying to him, "inasmuch as it would have proved even to the veriest Tory in the United States that the British government received through the 'Little Belt' chastisement justly apportioned to the merits of the case."

The people of the United States generally, and more particularly those of the Middle and Southern States, were highly pleased with the defeat and humiliation of the "Little Belt." - Rodgers was hailed and toasted as

a hero. At New York he was serenaded on board his ship by a band of music. Some of the citizens of the metropolis proposed to compliment him by roasting a pig in his honor. The dwellers on George Street petitioned the corporation of New York to change the name of their thoroughfare to Rodgers Street in order to commemorate the late glorious action and at the same time to remove a memorial of George III, "the most execrable tyrant of the human race."

A notion of the patriotic feelings aroused in the South by the engagement may be obtained from the following account of the fight that appeared in a North Carolina newspaper. The editor confessed that his narrative might not be "quite perfect in detail":

"The President (God bless him) ordered Commodore Rodgers of the ship 'President,' who is as brave as Cæsar, to go in quest of the Pirate, and take the boy and all Americans found on board the British frigate, at the risk of his life, from the iron grasp of a minion of a tyrant. Commodore Rodgers got his ship under way, and stood to the southward, with a crew whose hearts were stout and strong and who did not forget that they were Americans, their hearts flowing with patriotism and bosoms burning with manly rage and indignation at the insult recently offered their country, and fell in with the British frigate. The Captain of the American, with his Eagle flying at his main and foretop (those eagles, the emblem of America, whose broad wings are yet destined to overshadow the world and to lead John Bull by the nose), hailed the Briton, and demanded what right he had to cruize within the jurisdiction of the United States and the waters thereof, to stop and detain neutral merchant ships belonging to the citizens of the United States, and impress natural born American

citizens from on board such ships? The Briton replied by pointing to his Cannon, which menace instantaneously produced a broadside. She blazed from her poop to her bow. The action lasted about one hour; the result and issue of which was that the American frigate took the Boy from on board of the English frigate and several American citizens who had been sometime detained in the service of the English commander, and left the 'Pizarro' like a log on the sea, her scuppers running with blood. The 'President' bent her course towards the Capes of Virginia."

The fight caused not a few local poets to tune their patriotic harps—it must be said, however, with rather indifferent success. The most presentable of these effusions is one that appeared under the heading, "Rodgers and Decatur; Tit for Tat; or the 'Chesapeake' paid for in British blood!!! Tune, Yankee Doodle." After reciting in half a score of stanzas the wrongs that America had suffered from the British, the poem turned its broadside upon the affair of the "President" and "Little Belt":

"But finding injuries prolong'd  
Become a growing evil,  
Our Commodore got leave, if wrong'd  
To blow 'em to the devil.

"And Rodgers is a spunky lad,  
In naval battles handy,  
'Twas he who whipped the Turks, sir,  
With Yankee doodle dandy.

"So, off he goes and tells his crew –  
The sails are quickly bent, sir,  
A better ship you never knew,  
She's called the 'President', sir.

"They hoisted up the topsails soon,  
The sailors are so handy;

While drums and fifes struck up the tune  
Of Yankee doodle dandy.

"On Thursday morn we saw a sail,  
Well armed with gun and swivel;  
Says Rodgers, we will chase and hail,  
And see if she'll be civil.

"So after her they hasten'd soon,  
The chase soon brought her handy,  
While drums and fifes still play'd the tune,  
Called Yankee doodle dandy.

"'Where are you from?' bold Rodgers cried,  
Which made the British wonder,  
Then with a gun they quick replied,  
Which made a noise like thunder.

"Like lightning we returned the joke,  
Our matches were so handy,  
The Yankee bull-dog nobly spoke  
The tune of doodle dandy.

"A brilliant action then began,  
Our fire so briskly burn'd, sir,  
While blood from British scuppers ran,  
Like seventy-six returned, sir.

"Our cannon roar'd and men huzza'd,  
And fir'd away so handy,  
Till Bingham struck, he was so scared,  
At hearing doodle dandy.

"Then having thus chastis'd the foe,  
And wounded thirty British,  
We gave the rascals leave to go,  
They felt so deuced skittish.

"Now toast our Commodore so brave,  
In toddy, flip, or brandy,  
And strike aloud the merry stave,  
Of Yankee doodle dandy."

The British rhymsters, like their brothers in America, rose to the occasion, as may be seen from the following verses, entitled "Rodgers and the 'Little Belt'":

"When Rodgers fighting notions felt,  
He grasped his sword in haste,  
But thought he'd better get a belt  
To hang it round his waist.

"John Bull has one, though small, 'tis true,  
It's yet well worth a joke,  
They say 'tis lin'd with good 'true blue',  
And tipp'd with 'heart of oak'.

"'I'll have it,' cried the Blust'ring Prig,  
And fierce his blade he drew,  
But found this Little Belt too big,  
It would not buckle too."

In England Rodgers was called a buccaneer or pirate, as had been John Paul Jones many years before him. According to one fictitious account he began his nautical career in the Guinea trade and from the lowest grade on board a slave-ship rose to the honor of being a master. "He sailed out of Baltimore, and was known by the names of Bully Rodgers and Black Jack, the latter from his complexion being dark, and the former from his tyrannical and blustering disposition. He has been often known to strip himself to his shirt and fight with one of his foremast hands. . . His manners are coarse, and where he affects the contrary, they show the sycophant. His education has been bad; he is very illiterate, but allowed by every person who knows him to have great judgment in the working of a ship."

Many of the American newspapers, and especially those favorable to the administration, warmly approved Rodgers's conduct. On the other hand, the Federalist prints censured him severely. Some of them blamed

him for chasing and hailing a British vessel on the high seas, and others for pursuing a ship after sunset. In New England where the adverse criticism was most common, the view was expressed that the "Little Belt" being a belligerent ship had a "right to the first shot." Party spirit ran high and often determined men's opinion of the engagement. When Captain Bingham's official statement appeared and it was found to differ in several particulars from Rodgers's, not a few Federalist newspapers espoused the British side of the dispute.

Bingham's statement was dated at sea, May 21, 1811, and was addressed to Herbert Sawyer, esquire, rear-admiral of the red and commander-in-chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels on the coast of North America. It was widely at variance with the report of Rodgers. The most important differences related to (1) the time consumed by the action and to (2) the firing of the first shot. Bingham said that the fight lasted three-quarters of an hour, while Rodgers gave figures that make its length from ten to fifteen minutes including an intermission of about four minutes. A discrepancy of this sort often happens, since not infrequently no one actually times an engagement, but each side estimates its length. The evidence on this point tends to support the statement of the American captain. The log of the "Little Belt" may be thought to show that the fight did not last three-quarters of an hour. The journal of the "President," kept by Midshipman M. C. Perry, who many years later became illustrious for his expedition to Japan, gives the time as about fifteen minutes. Captain Ludlow thought the fight might have lasted as long as eighteen minutes.

A more important matter is the solution of the question, Who fired the first shot? In all probability, the

first gun was fired without orders and accidentally. Captain Bingham was positive that his vessel was not the aggressor. Describing the beginning of the engagement, he said that on his hailing a second time the American captain "repeated my words, and fired a broadside, which I instantly returned." Rodgers's account is still more specific: "After a pause of fifteen or twenty seconds, I reiterated my first enquiry of 'What ship is that?' and before I had time to take the trumpet from my mouth was answered by a shot that cut off our main-topmast breast-backstays and went into our mainmast." It is useless to attempt to harmonize these statements. The evidence now accessible tends to prove that the fight began with a single shot from the British vessel and not with a broadside from the American. The inference to be drawn from Bingham's account that the engagement opened with an overt act of violence of the "President" is certainly false. Rodgers's account permits the assumption, which is highly probable, that the first shot was accidentally fired, while Bingham's account precludes it.

Bingham's statement certainly shows carelessness in its preparation, if not a more reprehensible failing. He gives his position on May twenty-first as "lat.  $36^{\circ} 53'$  N., long.  $71^{\circ} 49'$  W., Cape Charles bearing W. 48 miles." This really marks two positions one hundred fifty miles apart. His report is somewhat more favorable to the British side of the dispute than the official log of the "Little Belt." He is far from being candid when he describes the close of the fight in the language of a British victory: "The action then became general and continued so for three quarters of an hour when he ceased firing and appeared to be on fire about the main hatchway. He then filled - I was obliged to desist from



firing as, the ship falling off, no gun would bear, and had no after sail to keep her too." These discrepancies give some color to the probability that those statements of Bingham which conflict with Rodgers's official letter are inaccurate.

Soon after the arrival of the "Little Belt" at Halifax, the Right Honorable Lord James Townshend, captain of the British ship "Aeolus," and two other officers of the Royal Navy investigated briefly the late action and obtained statements from several of the sloop's officers. The inquiry appears to have been a more or less informal one. Five officers, the senior lieutenant, a junior lieutenant, the boatswain, purser, and surgeon, gave accounts of the fight. Why these five officers were examined and not others is not clear. It is well known that the regular station of the surgeon and purser during an engagement is in the cockpit. In this fight the surgeon was below, but it seems that the purser was on deck. Each of these five men corroborated in all essential particulars their captain's narrative.<sup>27</sup>

Bingham's official letter and the statements of his officers, together with the unfavorable comments of Federalist newspapers, moved Rodgers to ask again for a court of enquiry. "I am again impelled by motives of common justice as well as delicacy for my own character to request," the commodore wrote to Hamilton, "that, if it is not at variance with the President's determinations, he will authorize you to order, when circumstances will best admit, an enquiry to be instituted into all the facts connected with the subject; that it may be proved incontestably that my official communication to you relative

<sup>27</sup> Henry Adams, in his *History of the United States*, vol. vi, 32, succeeds in discrediting the examination and information of William Burkit, a seaman of the "President."

to the affair in question was not only founded on fact but was at the same time minutely correct. By this mode I shall, I flatter myself, be enabled to explain in the most satisfactory manner why I was justified in chasing the 'Little Belt,' as also that there was nothing in my conduct of a hostile nature further than what was imperiously forced upon me by my assumed adversary. In making this request I am conscious of having done my duty in a manner the most honorable to my country and to myself. And altho the occasion was in itself too insignificant to afford me an opportunity of acquiring personal fame, I am nevertheless desirous these facts should be established and that too on a basis not to be effected by the poisonous tongue of slander or even doubted by the most mistrustful."

Madison now acceded to Rodgers's wishes. "Your first request to have a court of enquiry," Secretary Hamilton wrote to Rodgers, "was refused because the President would not for a moment permit himself to entertain a doubt as to the entire correctness of your communication. The refusal to grant your request was therefore to be considered as an evidence of the high confidence reposed in your candor and in your honor, and I can assure you that no circumstance has since occurred to diminish that confidence. But as a statement essentially different from yours, bearing the signature of Captain Bingham, has been published to the world, and as the President considers we have a just right to complain of the act of hostility committed and of the insult offered in this case to the flag of the United States, it is due to your honor and to the honor of the American nation that a court of enquiry should be instituted that the facts stated by you may be confirmed beyond doubt, and that any measure which the President

may think proper to adopt in consequence may rest upon incontrovertible grounds."

As president of the court Hamilton chose Commodore Stephen Decatur and as the two other members Captains Charles Stewart and Isaac Chauncey. This excellent selection insured an impartial and dignified trial. Decatur and Chauncey had been more or less closely associated with Rodgers in the naval service. Stewart, however, had at one time been unfriendly to him. William Paulding, adjutant-general of the state of New York, and a brother-in-law of Washington Irving, was appointed judge advocate. The secretary ordered the court to examine minutely into every circumstance stated in Rodgers's official letter, and to take all the testimony that would in any manner or degree elucidate the facts.

The court convened on board the frigate "President" in New York Harbor on August 30, 1811, and held daily sessions until its final adjournment on September twelfth. All the principal officers of the ship, of every rank, with the exception of the purser and surgeon who did not see the fight, were examined. Rodgers requested that these two officers be called to the stand, but he was overruled by the judge advocate. Every lieutenant, midshipman, and gun-captain of the ship gave in their testimony. The total number of witnesses was fifty-one. A very few of the officers, owing to their position on shipboard at the time, were not sure which vessel began the action, but they were of the opinion that it was the "Little Belt." All the rest were sure the British ship fired the first shot, and many of them testified that they saw the flash of her gun. As a sample of the testimony of these latter, that of the captain of marines may be given:

"Question. Were you in a position to observe the 'Little Belt' at the time the first gun was fired?

"Answer. I was. I was looking directly at the 'Little Belt' through the starboard gangway.

"Question. From which ship was the first gun fired?

"Answer. From the 'Little Belt.' I saw the flash of her gun and immediately heard the report. Commodore Rodgers, turning to me, asked what the devil was that; and I replied she has fired into us."

The testimony of the witnesses agreed with Rodgers's official report in every essential particular. All said that the engagement began with the firing of a single shot. Lieutenant Creighton testified that the commodore before the engagement gave the specific order "not to fire on the chase unless she fired on us." Lieutenant Dallas testified that as soon as he saw the flash of the "Little Belt's" gun and had heard its report, he fired a gun, without orders. At the close of the trial, Rodgers made a statement in which he characterized Bingham's report as palpably and wilfully false. He took God to witness that he did not chase the "Little Belt" with the intention of offering menace or insult to the British flag; for the orders under which he was acting would not have authorized such a course, "any more than they would have justified my submitting to an insult from a British or any other ship of war."

In its report the court enumerated at length the facts disclosed by the evidence. It found that the "Little Belt" fired the first shot and also began the general fire, and that the engagement lasted about thirteen minutes. It found that the commodore had twice silenced the fire of the British vessel and that each time thereafter he had exerted himself to prevent her further injury. It declared that his official letter was a correct and true

statement of the occurrences of the fight. These findings were highly satisfactory to Secretary Hamilton. In transmitting them to Madison, he observed that the result "absolutely justifies the confidence you have been pleased to repose in the correctness of the commodore's statement of facts." While the careful historian in the absence of further evidence may prefer to refrain from pronouncing a final judgment upon all the points in controversy, he must yet recognize the justness of the secretary's concluding words to the president: "In reviewing the attitude in which this affair is now placed, I think it may safely be asserted that the respectability of each member of the court, of the witnesses also, their number and concurrence of testimony, all combine in forming a mass of evidence not to be resisted, and which places the Commodore above the reach of censure or even of suspicion."

The President-Little Belt affair greatly intensified the feelings of ill-will with which America and Great Britain already regarded each other. It furnished an additional subject of contention and widened the breach between the two countries. Each government believed the account of the fight given by its own officers. In the United States the administration was well aware that the possibility of a war had been greatly increased. The secretary of the navy kept his fleet ready for hostilities to the full extent that the limited naval appropriations permitted. Immediately after the engagement he feared that the British would at once retaliate by attacking one of our ships, and he cautioned Rodgers to be on his guard as he was now marked for British vengeance. During the midsummer and autumn of 1811 the commodore made several cruises along the Atlantic coast, but they were without noteworthy incidents. On learn-

ing that the "Guerrière" wore her name on her fore-topsail in large black letters and was on the lookout for him, he painted the name of his ship on each of his top-sails in letters that might be seen ten miles off. In November his fleet went into winter quarters at Newport.

## X. CRUISES IN THE "PRESIDENT" DURING THE WAR OF 1812: 1812-1814

FROM the end of the Tripolitan War in 1805 to the beginning of the War of 1812, Commodore Rodgers was the leading officer of the navy in active service. During these seven years he held the most important offices in the gift of the navy department, commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean squadron, commander of the New York station and flotilla, and commander of the northern division of ships. By the death of Commodore Samuel Barron in 1810 and of Commodore Samuel Nicholson in 1811, he was advanced to the second place on the navy list. The one officer above him in rank was Commodore Alexander Murray of Revolutionary fame. Rodgers, however, was far more widely known than the senior officer of the navy. The affair of the "President" and "Little Belt" had brought him much renown both at home and abroad. At Washington he was highly esteemed by the chief officials of the government. It is said that "when a member of Congress, who had a high idea of the superior and matchless skill of the British and but a very moderate opinion of the skill, enterprise and bravery of his own countrymen, and was therefore discouraged and dismayed at the idea of our building a navy, asked in a tone of despair, 'If we had a fleet where is the man among us who is fit for an admiral of it?' the answer from all parts of the House was, 'Commodore Rodgers.'"<sup>28</sup>

As Commodore Murray was too old for duties at sea,

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<sup>28</sup> *The Polyanthos* (Boston, 1813), vol. iii, 1.

Rodgers during the War of 1812 was the senior naval officer in command. Next to him in rank, since the death of Preble in 1807, was Commodore James Barron, who, however, took no part in the war. When his five years' sentence of suspension from the navy expired early in 1813 he was abroad, where he remained for several years. Junior to Barron on the captains' list in 1812 were, in order, Bainbridge, Campbell, Decatur, Tingey, Stewart, Hull, Chauncey, Shaw, and Smith. Of these officers, Bainbridge, Decatur, Stewart, Hull, Chauncey, and Smith were chiefly relied on by the department for sea services. For several years preceding the war Decatur had stood next to Rodgers in the estimation of the secretary of the navy, and he had been given some of the most responsible commands. In 1810, Bainbridge obtained a furlough and entered the merchant service. He made two voyages to St. Petersburg, and appears to have been in Russia when in the fall of 1811 he learned that a war with England was threatening. He at once started for home, and arrived in Boston in February, 1812, after a very fatiguing journey of twelve hundred miles on the continent and a dangerous passage of fifty-three days. On his arrival he offered his services to the department, and they were accepted. Of the nine masters-commandant of the navy, Porter, Jacob Jones, and Lawrence were destined to achieve most fame; and of the lieutenants, O. H. Perry, Macdonough, Biddle, Warrington, Allen, Burrows, and Elliott, were to win the laurels.

Early in 1812 Secretary Hamilton called upon Commodore Rodgers to assist him in performing certain general tasks preparatory to war. In January the secretary had under consideration the establishment of a coast signal system, designed to connect Washington with New York and other leading seaports. His plan



provided for a signal code, signal routes, and signal stations in sight of each other. When the subject was referred to Rodgers for consideration, he expressed the opinion that the advantages to be derived from so extensive a system would not justify the large outlay that its installation and maintenance would necessitate. He said, however, that it was very essential that New York and Sandy Hook, distant from each other some thirty miles, should be brought into communication; and later he was ordered by the secretary to connect the two points. Becoming interested in the general subject of signaling, the commodore devised two signal codes, one for land and the other for sea, both of which were adopted by the department. A drawing that he prepared representing the different pennants used in his plan for day signaling on board ships of war is still preserved in the naval archives at Washington.

Remembering the confusion during the Tripolitan War, caused by two or more commodores flying the same sort of flag when they were in company, Rodgers recommended the adoption by the department of three orders of broad pennants. A pennant of the first order was to be a blue flag with white stars, of the second order a red flag with white stars, and of the third order a white flag with blue stars. When three fleets were in company, the flag-ship of the senior commodore was to fly the blue pennant, the ship of the commodore next in rank the red pennant, and that of the junior commodore the white pennant. The department was favorably impressed with Rodgers's recommendation, and it established three orders of broad pennants after the manner that he proposed.

Before war was declared by the United States, Hamilton wrote to several leading naval officers asking

them to prepare a plan of operations for our little navy. The replies of Rodgers, Decatur, and Bainbridge have been preserved. Of these, that of Rodgers, according to the eminent naval authority, Admiral A. T. Mahan, is the "most consonant with sound military views." The commodore was of the opinion that our ships should take the offensive. Accordingly he would send a small squadron to cruise off the British Isles, and some of the lighter vessels to harass the enemy's commerce in the West Indies. Occasionally all the frigates were to be united for the purpose of intercepting the British East India convoy. A few ships were to cruise along the trade routes between England and Canada, and a few others along the American coast. Decatur and Bainbridge wished to send the vessels to sea either singly or by twos to attack the commerce of the enemy at such points as their commanders should choose. Rodgers's plan was strong in its provision for coöperation and combined action; while the plans of his fellow officers favored individual movements.

The winter of 1811-1812, Commodore Rodgers spent at Newport, chiefly engaged in overhauling and repairing the ships of his squadron. On March twenty-eighth, accompanied by the "Essex," he sailed in the "President" for New York. Owing to a heavy gale he was carried south of the Delaware and did not reach his destination until April third. At New York he was busy for several days establishing a signal service between that city and Sandy Hook and enforcing a new embargo law passed in anticipation of war. On the ninth the secretary of the navy, having been informed that the "Guerrière" and another British frigate were molesting our trade in the vicinity of the Delaware Capes, ordered Rodgers to put to sea and guard our

commerce. For several weeks he cruised between Sandy Hook and Cape Hatteras, a part of the time in company with Commodore Decatur, but saw no British vessels.

In accordance with the orders of Secretary Hamilton, Rodgers spent the first days of June at New York repairing and equipping his fleet. In anticipation of hostilities, the secretary wrote to him on June fifth to be prepared in all respects for extensive service; and on the thirteenth, expecting a declaration of war on that day, he wrote "For God's sake get ready and let us strike a good blow." On June eighteenth, the commodore completed the repairing and provisioning of the "President," 44, and also the sloop of war "Hornet," 18, Master-commandant James Lawrence. The frigate "Essex," 32, Master-commandant David Porter, was not yet ready for sea, since on examination she was found to need a new foremast. On the nineteenth the fleet of Commodore Decatur consisting of the flag-ship "United States," 44; the frigate "Congress," 36, Captain John Smith; and the brig "Argus," 16, Lieutenant Arthur Sinclair, anchored in Sandy Hook Bay. On the twentieth, being informed by General Joseph Bloomfield, commander of the military forces at New York, that war had been declared by Congress on the eighteenth, Rodgers at once took measures of defense. He ordered the commandant of the navy-yard to employ the gun-boats, in coöperation with the army, for the protection of New York Harbor; he directed Captain Porter to prepare the "Essex" for sea with all possible dispatch; and he declared an embargo on all vessels in port.

On the morning of the twenty-first Rodgers's ships weighed anchor and joined Decatur's fleet in Sandy Hook Bay. The combined squadron consisted of the "President," "United States," "Congress," "Hornet,"

and "Argus." For several hours, with every vessel ready for sea, Rodgers awaited orders from the secretary of the navy. He had high hopes of capturing one or more of the British ships of war that had been recently reported to be on our coast. On June fifteenth, the frigate "Belvidera" was seen off Sandy Hook; and on the nineteenth Decatur, not knowing that war had been declared, fell in with the British vessels "Tartarus" and "Mackerel" near New York. A more particular object of Rodgers was the intercepting of a fleet of merchantmen that had sailed from Jamaica for England, under convoy, about May twentieth. According to one report, probably exaggerated, the fleet consisted of one hundred ten sail and was worth twelve million pounds sterling. The commodore calculated that on the twenty-first of June the Jamaicamen were probably southeast of New York on the edge of the Gulf Stream.

Both officers and seamen were in high spirits and eager for adventure. They were resolved not to return to port until they had won new laurels for the navy. When the commodore received the news of the declaration of war, he ordered the crew of the flag-ship on deck and addressed them, it is said, after this fashion: "Now lads, we have got something to do that will shake the rust from our jackets. War is declared! We shall have another dash at our old enemies. It is the very thing that you have long wanted. The rascals have been bullying over us these ten years, and I am glad the time is come at last when we can have satisfaction. If there are any among you who are unwilling to risk your lives with me, say so, and you shall be paid off and discharged. I'll have no skulkers on board my ship, by G—d." A general huzza followed this speech, and

every man of the crew declared that he would stand by the commodore.

A similar scene occurred on board the "Hornet." "Sunday; this morning the declaration of war by the United States against Great Britain was read," wrote one of the midshipmen of that vessel. "At ten o'clock a.m. Commodore Rodgers hove out the signal to weigh. Never was anchor to the cathead sooner, nor topsail sheated to the masthead with more dispatch than upon the present occasion. The smallest boy on board seemed anxious to meet what is now looked upon as the common tyrant of the ocean, for they had heard the woeful tales of the older tars. . . . When the ship was under weigh Captain Lawrence had the crew called to their quarters, and told them if there were any amongst them who were disaffected, or one that had not rather sink than surrender to the enemy, with gun for gun, that he should be immediately and uninjured landed and sent back in the pilot boat. The reply was fore and aft, 'Not one'."

At about 3 p.m. on the twenty-first Rodgers, being then in Sandy Hook Bay with his fleet, received the following orders from Secretary Hamilton, dated June eighteenth: "I apprise you that war has been this day declared between the United Empire of Great Britain and Ireland and their dependencies and the United States of America. You are to consider the vessels under your command as entitled to every belligerent right, as well of attack as defense. For the present it is desirable that with the force under your command you remain in such position as to enable you most conveniently to receive further, more extensive, and more particular orders, which will be conveyed to you through New York. But, as it is understood that there are one or more British cruis-

ers on the coast in the vicinity of Sandy Hook, you are at your discretion free to strike at them, returning immediately after into port. You are free to capture or destroy them. Extend these orders to Commodore Decatur."

Within ten minutes after receiving this message, without waiting for further directions, Rodgers put to sea with his fleet of five ships. He shaped his course to the southeast in expectation of falling in with some vessel that could give him information respecting the Jamaicamen. At 6 p.m., he spoke a pilot-boat and was informed that an English vessel had been sighted to the northeastward. Making all sail in chase, he came up with the stranger about 8 p.m., and brought her to by firing a shot across her bow. Unfortunately she proved to be not a vessel of the enemy, but the American ship "Powhatan." She was bound to France, and had on board as a passenger General Moreau. During the twenty-second nothing worthy of remark occurred. At 3 a.m. on the twenty-third the squadron spoke the brig "Indian Chief," bound from Bermuda to New York. Her master informed Rodgers that two days before he had seen the Jamaica fleet to the northwestward of Bermuda. The commodore now steered to the eastward with all canvas set in pursuit, calculating that the fleet had some three hundred miles the start of him.

At about six o'clock of the morning of the twenty-third, when the squadron was about one hundred miles southwest of Nantucket Shoals, a ship was discovered in the northeast, standing directly toward the American vessels. The stranger later proved to be the British 32-gun frigate "Belvidera," commanded by Captain Richard Byron, a brave and skilful officer of the Royal Navy. She actually mounted forty-two guns; twenty-six long

18-pounders, two 9-pounders, and fourteen 32-pound carronades. She was considerably weaker in force than either one of the three American frigates, "President," "United States," or "Congress."

On sighting the stranger, Rodgers signaled his vessels to chase, which they at once did, under a heavy press of sail. On seeing that she was pursued, the "Belvidera" turned about and fled, shaping a northeasterly course. The wind during the day blew from N.N.W. to W.S.W., and varied in force from light to moderate. As the American ships were recently out of port, they were deep in the water, and therefore sailed under a disadvantage. During the forenoon, however, they gained gradually on the "Belvidera." The "President," being the fastest ship of the fleet, was considerably in the lead of the "Congress," the foremost of the four other pursuing vessels. At 11 a.m. expecting soon to overtake the enemy, the commodore ordered his flag-ship cleared for action. About an hour later the "Belvidera" also made preparations for battle. Both vessels hoisted their colors. The broad pennants of Rodgers and Decatur were discernible from the British ship. At noon the commodore was about three miles from the chase, and almost directly southwest of Nantucket Shoals, distant about fifty miles. The wind now became lighter and inclined more to the southwestward. These changes in the weather favored the "Belvidera." The "President" gained on her more slowly, and the other ships of the squadron dropped farther to the rear. At 4 p.m. it was doubtful whether the flag-ship was really decreasing the lead of the chase.

The commodore had planned to lay his vessel alongside of the "Belvidera" and open fire with a broadside. He had approached within easy gunshot of her.

Both ships were steering about the same course. Perceiving that he was not likely to overtake the enemy's ship and that she was training her stern guns upon him apparently with the intention of injuring his spars and rigging, Rodgers at 4:20 p.m. gave orders to begin firing with his bow guns, with a view to crippling the "Belvidera" above deck and reducing her sailing power. Both vessels, continuing under full sail, now engaged in a running fight. It opened with three shots from the "President," each one of which did execution. One of them struck the rudder coat of the "Belvidera" and entered the gun-room, and another hit the muzzle of her larboard chase gun. The third killed one seaman, mortally wounded the armorer, and wounded less severely a lieutenant, a ship's corporal, and two seamen. The British ship returned the fire with her four stern chasers.

Commodore Rodgers directed in person the firing on board the "President." He is said to have pointed the gun that fired the first shot of the engagement, which was the first shot of the War of 1812. Some fifteen minutes after the fight began a most unfortunate accident occurred on board the flag-ship. One of her bow chasers, which was in charge of Lieutenant Thomas Gamble, burst, killing Midshipman John Taylor and wounding fourteen men, among whom were Rodgers, Gamble, and Midshipman M. C. Perry. The commodore was blown into the air, and in falling on the deck fractured a bone of one of his legs. Supported by his men, he continued to direct the fight. These casualties Rodgers said in his official report of the engagement were not the most serious injuries received by the "President":

"By the bursting of the gun and the explosion of the



passing-box from which it was served with powder, both the main and fore-castle decks (near the gun) were so much shattered as to prevent the use of the chase gun on that side for some time. Our main-deck guns being single shotted, I now gave orders to put our helm to starboard and fire the starboard broadside in the expectation of disabling some of his spars, but did not succeed, altho I could discover that his rigging had sustained considerable damage and that he had received some injury in the stern.

"I now endeavored by altering our course half a point to port and wetting our sails to gain a more effective position on his starboard quarter, but soon found myself losing ground; after this a similar attempt was made at his larboard quarter, but without any better success, as the wind at this time being very light and both ships sailing so nearly alike that by making an angle of only half a point from the course he steered, enabled him to augment his distance. No hope was now left of bringing him to close action except that derived from being to the windward and the expectation that the breeze might favor us first. I accordingly gave orders to steer directly after him and keep our bow chase guns playing on his spars and rigging until our broadside would more effectually reach him. At 5, finding from the advantage his stern guns gave him that he had done considerable injury to our sails and rigging and being within pointblank shot, I gave orders to put the helm to starboard and fire our main-deck guns. This broadside did some farther damage to his rigging and I could perceive that his fore-topsail yard was wounded, but the sea was so very smooth and the wind so light that the injury done was not such as materially to affect his sailing. After this broadside our

course was instantly renewed in his wake under a galling fire from his stern chase guns directed at our spars and rigging, and continued until half past 6, at which time being within reach of his grape and finding our sails, rigging and several spars, particularly the main yard which had little left to support it except the lifts and braces, very much disabled, I again gave orders to luff across his stern and give him a couple of broadsides.

"The enemy at this time finding himself so hardly pressed and seeing, while in the act of firing our broadside, our head sails to lift and supposing that the ship had in a measure lost the effect of her helm, he gave a broad yaw with the intention of bringing his broadside to bear. Finding the "President," however, answered her helm too quick for his purpose, he immediately resumed his course and precipitately fired his four after main-deck guns on the starboard side, altho they did not bear at the time by twenty-five or thirty degrees; and he now commenced lightening his ship by throwing overboard all his boats, waist anchors, etc., etc., and by this means was enabled by a quarter before 7 to get so far ahead as to prevent our bow guns doing execution. And I now perceived with more mortification than words can express that there was little or no chance left of getting within gunshot of the enemy again, under every disadvantage of disabled spars, sails, and rigging. I, however, continued the chase with all the sail we could set until half past 11 p.m., when perceiving he had gained upwards of three miles and not the slightest prospect of coming up with him, I gave up the pursuit and made the signal to the other ships as they came up to do the same."

The "President" was the only vessel of Rodgers's

squadron that took part in the engagement. At one time the "Congress," the headmost of the other four ships, was within two gunshots of the "Belvidera," and she fired several shots, all of which of course fell short. The "United States," "Hornet," and "Argus" did not waste any ammunition on the enemy. The "Hornet" broached a barrel of beef and expended ninety-five gallons of water in an attempt to increase her speed. The "President" inflicted more damage than she received. She lost two men killed and five wounded (not counting the casualties caused by the bursting of her gun), while the "Belvidera" had two men killed and twenty-two wounded. The maintopmast and cross-jack yard of the British ship were badly injured, and her sails and rigging were much damaged. The "President" also suffered considerably in her spars and rigging. Captain Byron was severely wounded by the breaking of the breechings of his guns. He was, however, cool and determined, and in the midst of the fight repaired many of the injuries received by his ship. He conducted his defense with great skill and judgment and deserves much praise for his escape from a superior force.

Rodgers displayed his usual ability, gallantry, and resolution. In spite of his broken leg, he remained on deck and directed the fight. The tactics that he adopted were such as under the circumstances seemed to him best, and, although they did not effect the capture of the fleeing ship, it is by no means certain that other tactics would have been more successful. Captain Byron is reported to have said that the commodore did all that any commander could have done to take the "Belvidera." One of Byron's officers ascribed the escape of the British ship to her superior sailing near the close of the fight caused by the throwing overboard of a part of

her equipment—her spare sheet anchor, small bower anchors, barge, yawl, galley boat, and fourteen tons of water. Rodgers's critics have censured him for not laying his ship alongside of the enemy instead of yawing and delivering broadsides. They assert that the time he thus lost, had it been expended in sailing a straight course, would have brought him up even with the chase. This is by no means certain, since during the fight the two ships were sailing at nearly the same rate. The critics also say that the commodore could have done more damage by a continued use of his chase guns. It should be remembered, however, that by the unfortunate accident on board the "President" the force of these guns was considerably reduced.

After repairing the spars and rigging of his flag-ship, Rodgers resumed his course in pursuit of the convoy. Nothing was heard of it until June twenty-ninth, when he fell in with an American schooner from Teneriffe, whose master informed him that two days before he had passed it one hundred fifty miles to the northeastward. The commodore now crowded all sail in chase. On July first, to the eastward of the Grand Banks he discovered some cocoanut shells, orange peels, and other refuse of tropical products floating on the water—signs that indicated the proximity of the Jamaicamen. Now and then the commodore interrupted his pursuit long enough to chase, speak, and capture a vessel of the enemy. On July second, he took the brig "Tionella" bound from the Bay of Fundy to Newcastle, the first naval prize of the war; and two days later the brig "Dutchess of Portland," both of which vessels he burned. On the ninth, to the northward of the Azores he captured the privateer "Dolphin" of Jersey, 10 guns, and sent her to Philadelphia in charge of a prize master.

Some of her men reported that they had seen the convoy on the preceding evening.

Rodgers continued the chase until he was within twenty hours of the British channel, and on July thirteenth, he reluctantly abandoned it. He now steered southward along the coast of Spain and Portugal, and on the twenty-first was off Madeira. Three days later he captured to the northwestward of the Canaries the English letter of marque "John," 16 guns, and sent her to America. From this point the squadron shaped its course for the Azores. Passing near the westernmost group of those islands, it sailed thence to the Grand Banks, and thence by way of Cape Sable to Boston. On the homeward voyage four more ships were captured: the "Argo," "Adeline," "Betsy," and "Hiram." Every vessel that was seen during the cruise was overhauled except the "Belvidera," two American ships, and a frigate supposed to be British. The latter was discovered at 4 p.m. on August twenty-eighth near Georges Bank. The "President" chased her and gained upon her until she was lost in the approaching darkness.

During the first part of the voyage the weather was frequently so foggy that the ships of the squadron could not discern each other a cable's length apart. For July eighteenth Midshipman M. C. Perry of the flag-ship has the following entry in his journal: "At 4 a.m. foggy weather, discovered a sail close aboard of us, called all hands, beat to quarters, and cleared ship for action. At half past 4 the fog cleared away, discovered the strange sail to be the 'Hornet' that had got separated from the squadron during the night, beat the retreat." For the last day of the cruise, August thirty-first, Perry has this entry: "At daylight discovered a frigate lying in Nantasket Roads, cleared ship for action and

stood for her. At 7 she proved the frigate 'Constitution' from a cruise, having captured the British frigate 'Guerrière.' This day moored ship in Boston harbor." The commodore returned to port sooner than he otherwise would have done had not the scurvy made its appearance on board the ships of his squadron. On the "United States" and "Congress" alone three hundred men were sick with this fearful disease.

Rodgers was more or less disappointed with the results of his cruise, for he had failed either to overhaul the Jamaicamen or to capture a ship of war. He had, however, taken eight English merchantmen, and he had been quite successful in effecting another object. "My calculations were," he wrote to the secretary of the navy, "even if I did not succeed in destroying the convoy, that leaving the coast in the manner we did would tend to distract the enemy, oblige him to concentrate a considerable portion of his most active force and at the same time prevent his single cruisers from laying before any of our principal ports from their not knowing to which port or what moment we might return; and it is now acknowledged even by the enemies of the administration that this disposition has been attended with infinite benefit to our returning commerce." Viewed thus, the commodore's cruise was the most successful one of the War of 1812.

"We have been so completely occupied in looking out for Commodore Rodgers's squadron," wrote a British officer on the North Atlantic station, "that we have taken very few prizes." "Our trade with little exception," said President Madison in his annual message for 1812, "has safely reached our ports, having been much favored in it by a squadron of our frigates under the command of Commodore Rodgers." The navy de-

partment took an exceedingly favorable view of the results of the cruise. After congratulating Rodgers on his safe return, it added: "Altho your cruise may have not been so fortunate as you could have wished, yet in having kept the sea you have induced the enemy to concentrate a considerable portion of his most active force; lessened his chances of capturing our merchant vessels; and of course enabled a great number of American vessels, which might and probably would otherwise have been captured, to reach their ports of destination. In this view, sir, you have most unquestionably rendered important services to your country. Your next cruise may be more glorious, but I shall consider it particularly fortunate if it should be attended with more substantial benefits to our country."

On arriving at Boston Rodgers at once prepared his ships for another cruise by refitting them, enlisting seamen, and laying in a supply of water and provisions. The recent successes of Hull in capturing the "*Guerrière*" and of Porter in taking the "*Alert*" made him all the more anxious to be again at sea, hoping, as he wrote to Hamilton, "that fortune will be more kind to me individually in my next cruise and that I may have it more in my power to demonstrate that there is no sacrifice I would not make for the benefit of my country." Before Rodgers was ready to sail a cartel arrived from Halifax with Lieutenant W. M. Crane and his officers and crew. They had been captured in July with their vessel, the brig "*Nautilus*," the first naval prize of the British. On learning that Admiral Sawyer had sent six seamen of the brig to England on the plea that they were Englishmen, Rodgers ordered the detention of twelve seamen of the crew of the "*Guerrière*" as hostages for the six Americans. The duty of ordering a court martial

to investigate the loss of the "Nautilus" also fell to the commodore at this time.

Early in the fall of 1812, the navy department issued orders dividing its little seagoing fleet into three divisions of three vessels each. To Rodgers fell the command of the "President," "Congress," and "Wasp"; to Decatur, the "United States," "Chesapeake," and "Argus"; and to Bainbridge, the "Constitution," "Essex," and "Hornet." As the "Wasp," Master-commandant Jacob Jones, was at Philadelphia, the commodore ordered her commander to proceed to sea and to cruise in certain specified latitudes until joined by the "President" and "Congress." Early in October these two latter vessels, together with the "United States" and "Argus," were at Boston ready for active service. In order to give the enemy an erroneous impression of their intended movements Rodgers and Decatur sailed from port in company. A few days later they separated. Before sailing Rodgers heard that the British fleets off the Delaware and the Chesapeake consisted of only two vessels each. Had he received some confirmation of this report, he would have sailed southward along the coast "in the hope," as he wrote, "that God in his infinite goodness will permit us to get for once fairly alongside of them, ship for ship." He finally decided to take an easterly course. Two days out of Boston he sighted and chased the British frigate "Nymphe," 38, but owing to the lightness of the wind and the approach of night, he failed to overtake her. She belonged to a fleet of five frigates, and the commodore must have passed near her consorts, although he did not see them.

On October fifteenth, after a two hours' chase in which the "President" carried away her maintopgallantmast, Rodgers captured, to the southward of the



Grand Banks, His Britannic Majesty's packet "Swallow," 10 guns, Master Joseph Morphew. She was bound from Jamaica to Falmouth, and had ten tons of gold and silver specie on board worth about one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars. On the same day he fell in with the American schooner "Eleanor," bound for France. As she had been recently dismasted, her master and crew agreed to abandon her and return to the United States with the packet, which the commodore turned over to them after having taken on board the "President" the gold and silver specie.

Rodgers now shaped a course toward the Canaries. On the morning of November first, when some four or five hundred miles south-southwest of the Azores, he discovered three strange sail to the southward, and at once gave chase, signaling the "Congress" to do the same. About noon one of the three ships carried away her foremast and was immediately captured. Leaving the "Congress" to take possession of her, the commodore pursued one of the other two vessels, which was about fifteen miles from him. He gradually gained on her and by sunset had reduced her lead some five or six miles. On the approach of darkness he gave up the pursuit and joined the "Congress." The third ship also effected her escape. The prize proved to be the whaler "Argo," 10 guns, laden with a valuable cargo of whale-oil, whalebone, and ebony. The vessel chased by Rodgers was the frigate "Galatea," 36 guns, which was convoying the little fleet from St. Helena to England; and the third ship was the whaler "Admiral Barclay," partly loaded with oil.

Passing to the westward of the Cape Verdes, Rodgers ran down the trades in 17° N., and near the fiftieth meridian he shaped his course for the Bermudas. For

four weeks he cruised to the northward and northward of those islands. The latter half of the cruise was quite uneventful, since few vessels of any kind were sighted. "No remarkable occurrence this day" is a frequent entry in the journal of Midshipman Perry. On one Sunday he records, "Called all hands and performed divine service;" and on another, "Called all hands to muster and read the articles of war." Now and then he notes the death of a seaman and the "committing of his body to the deep." For December twenty-first, he made the following entry: "Commences with strong gales from the north and westward and a heavy sea, laying to. At half past 3 beat to quarters and housed the gun-deck guns. At 9 set the fore-staysail. At 10 a heavy sea struck the ship a beam, carried away the starboard hammock stations, killed John Armstrong and Joseph Dunsdan (seamen) and wounded six men, broke the lower studding-sail boom, and started the launch, broke in three half-ports and started all the others; the hatches being off for the purpose of passing shot below, took in a great quantity of water; rigged all the pumps, battened the hatches down, and soon cleared her."

The commodore remained at sea until his provisions and water were exhausted. Compelled then to return to port, he sailed for Boston where he anchored on December 31, 1812, after a cruise of eighty-five days and nearly eleven thousand miles. He had seen but five British vessels, and two of these he had captured. His inability to discover the enemy is not surprising, for the British government was now strictly enforcing its laws compelling British ships to sail in squadron and accompanied by convoy. Rodgers's third ship the "Wasp" left the Delaware on October thirteenth. Four days

later, between the Bermudas and Halifax, she fell in with the British brig "Frolic" and captured her after a well fought engagement, in which Lieutenant G. W. Rodgers, the commodore's brother, distinguished himself. Soon after the fight, the "Wasp" and her prize were captured by the British seventy-four "Poitiers."

The squadrons of Decatur and Bainbridge were more fortunate than that of Rodgers. Decatur's flag-ship, the "United States," captured the British frigate "Macedonian," 38, to the southward of the Azores, and his two smaller vessels took several merchantmen. Bainbridge's fleet was the most successful of all. His flag-ship "Constitution" captured the frigate "Java," 38, off the coast of Brazil; and the sloop "Hornet," Master-commandant James Lawrence, the brig "Peacock," 18, off Demerara. His third vessel, the "Essex," Captain David Porter, signalized herself by entering the Pacific and making the most notable cruise of the war as respects depredations on British commerce.

The commodore was busily employed during his four months' stay in Boston. The "President," after her two long cruises, needed many repairs. As the winter of 1812-1813 was a very severe one, the work on her proceeded slowly and she was not again ready for sea until the middle of spring. While Rodgers was at Boston, the Massachusetts legislature sought his advice regarding the defense of that city. In response to a request of a committee of merchants, he officered and manned the privateer schooner "General Hull" and sent her to sea to protect the coasting trade between Boston and Martha's Vineyard. Off Cape Cod she was fired into by the American privateer "Anaconda" and her commander, Lieutenant Henry S. Newcomb, and two seamen were wounded. On March 2, 1813, the

commodore, with Captains Hull and Smith, attended a splendid dinner at the Exchange Coffee-House, in Boston, given to Commodore Bainbridge and his officers in honor of their victory over the "Java." On this festive occasion, Rodgers responded to the toast, "The citizens of the state of Massachusetts."

From the spring of 1813 until the end of the war the British maintained a rigorous blockade of the chief American seaports. During 1813 only six of our naval ships succeeded in getting to sea. These were the "President," "Congress," "Chesapeake," "Enterprise," "Argus," and "Constitution." The last named ship did not run the blockade until one of the last days of December. To evade the fleets of the enemy, in leaving port and in returning, now required considerable skill and good fortune. Late in May, 1813, the "United States," "Macedonian," and "Hornet," in attempting to go to sea from New York by way of Long Island Sound were chased into New London where they remained for many months. The "Constellation" was blockaded at Norfolk during the whole year.

Hoping to induce the enemy to relax the blockade, the secretary of the navy decided to attack the British merchantmen at as many points as possible. He therefore ordered his ships to cruise singly along the principal trade routes of the North Atlantic. This order left Rodgers the command of only the frigate "President." By the middle of April, 1813, the "President" and the frigate "Congress," Captain John Smith, were ready for sea. In expectation of encountering the British frigates "Shannon" and "Tenedos," which vessels were blockading Boston and had indicated their desire of meeting the American ships, Rodgers and Smith decided to leave port in company. On April twenty-third,

they dropped down to President Road, four miles from the city, where owing to head winds they remained a week. They sailed on the thirtieth, but were compelled to beat about in Boston Bay until May third. They saw nothing of the "Shannon" and "Tenedos," since the British frigates had temporarily left the coast on account of easterly winds. On the afternoon of the third they chased a brig of war near Georges Shoal. They also sighted two other vessels, which the commodore supposed were the "Hogue," 74, and "Nymphe," 38. On May eighth, the "President" and "Congress" parted company.

With a view to intercepting the enemy's West India trade, homeward bound, Rodgers cruised for a time to the southward of the Grand Banks. Not meeting any vessels in that quarter except American ones from Lisbon and Cadiz, he turned northward and spent several days on the eastern edge of the Banks along the routes of the West India, Halifax, Quebec, and St. Johns trades. Here he experienced thick fogs and saw no British vessels. Toward the end of May he steered southeasterly, and remained for a week or more to the westward of the Azores. Falling in with an American ship bound for Cadiz, he learned that she had four days previous passed a West India fleet, under convoy, returning home. With a view to intercepting it, he crowded all sail to the northwestward, but saw nothing of the West Indiamen. He, however, between June ninth and thirteenth made four captures: the brig "Kitty," 2 guns, bound from Newfoundland to Alicant; the packet "Duke of Montrose," 12 guns, bound from Falmouth to Halifax; the letter of marque "Maria," 14 guns, and the schooner "Falcon," 2 guns, both bound from Newfoundland to Spain. The "Kitty," "Maria," and "Fal-

con" were laden with codfish, and were sent to France in charge of prize masters. The packet, Rodgers sent to England as a cartel, with seventy-eight prisoners.

The commodore now decided to proceed northward of the British Isles, with a view to falling in with the Newfoundland trade on his way and to intercepting the enemy's northern trade after reaching his cruising-grounds. Not until he made the Shetland Islands did he see a single vessel of any kind. Since his provisions and water now needed replenishing, he sailed for the coast of Norway and arrived at Bergen on June twenty-sixth, latitude  $61^{\circ}$  N. On nearing port, Midshipman M. C. Perry was dispatched in a cutter to obtain a pilot. He landed on the small, sterile island of Udvaer, which was inhabited by only a few fishermen. At first the inhabitants were afraid of him, but on finding that he was not an Englishman received him hospitably and offered him milk, fish, and brown bread as tokens of their friendly feelings. He returned to the ship with two fishermen, who piloted the "President" into the harbor. She was the first American ship of war to visit a Norwegian port.

Previous to anchoring, the commodore sent Lieutenant C. W. Morgan on shore to inform the commander of the local military forces of the character of the American ship and to confer with him about the firing of salutes. Morgan was politely received by the Norwegian officer, who expressed his readiness to return the compliment of the commodore, gun for gun. After the "President" had fired a salute of seventeen guns and it had been answered by the fort, the commander sent one of his aides on board the ship to welcome the visitors. On June twenty-ninth, Rodgers, accompanied by several of his officers, paid a visit of courtesy to the gov-

ernor of Bergen and to the commander of the military forces, who received him with much civility. During his stay in port he dined at the house of Herman Diedrich Jansen, one of the most opulent and respectable merchants of the place, and the father of the American consul. Here he met all the chief celebrities of Bergen, including the governor, commander, and bishop of the province.

As the residents of Bergen had never before seen an American naval vessel, they were greatly interested in the "President." "Soon after anchoring," Rodgers wrote in his journal, "the whole bay in which we lay appeared alive with boats crowded with spectators of all classes, and continued so not only the afternoon but during the whole night. Indeed it appeared as if their curiosity could never be gratified, as the only pleasure the inhabitants of the city and surrounding country appeared to take was in rowing round the ship; and this they continued to do night as well as day from the hour of our arrival until the moment of our departure."

Owing to a scarcity of provisions in Bergen, there being only a month's supply of bread for the inhabitants, Rodgers obtained but sixteen barrels of coarse rye meal and a little cheese. After taking in water, he sailed on July second for the Orkney Islands; thence he stretched towards the North Cape on the northern coast of Norway with a view to intercepting a convoy of twenty-five or thirty vessels which were expected to leave Archangel about the middle of July. On the twelfth he captured the brig "Jean and Ann," and on the eighteenth the brig "Daphne," both in ballast and bound to Archangel. After removing their crews and stores, he burned them. On the eighteenth, he fell in with the American privateer schooner "Scourge," of New York.

He had now reached the northwest coast of Norway, latitude  $71^{\circ}$  N. It was midsummer, and at midnight the sun was still above the horizon.

At 4 p.m. of the nineteenth, while the "Scourge" was still in company, the commodore discovered two strange ships in the west-southwest, and at once made sail in chase of them. Owing to hazy weather, he was unable to ascertain their character with precision. At the end of a three hours' chase, when about five miles from the strangers, he made them out to be a British line of battle ship and a frigate, vessels greatly his superior in force. To avoid them, he hauled by the wind and tacked to the northward and westward. Pursued by the strangers, he continued his flight for about ninety hours. Early in the chase the "Scourge" parted company with him. As the weather was often hazy, the pursuers and pursued at times lost sight of each other. About noon of the twenty-first, when the enemy was rapidly gaining on him, Rodgers cleared his ship for action. In the afternoon, however, the "President" outsailed her pursuers, and toward evening ran them out of sight. The following day, the commodore tried to separate the two ships and engage the smaller one, which was in advance of her consort. He shortened sail, hoisted his colors, and fired a gun to windward. Refusing to fight on these terms, the smaller vessel hove to and waited for the larger one to come up. On the morning of the twenty-third the "President," having outsailed the enemy's ships, lost sight of them for the last time.

The commodore's officers agreed with him that the strangers were a line of battle ship and a frigate, as may be seen from the Day-book of the "President," kept by Lieutenants Rapp, Morgan, R. H. J. Perry, and Newcomb; and the journal of the "President"



kept by Lieutenant M. C. Perry. The last named officer under date of July nineteenth, makes the following entry: "At 7 p.m. found the two sails to be a line of battle ship and a frigate." It is now known that the commodore and his officers were mistaken, and that the two strangers were His Majesty's ship "Alexandria," 38, and sloop of war "Spitfire," 16. From the rates of these vessels, it would appear that had Rodgers engaged the enemy his chances of success would have been excellent. Before rendering a final judgment on this point, however, it would be necessary to obtain an accurate statement of the number of men and the number and calibre of the guns carried by both the American and British ships.

Disappointed in not meeting the convoy, Rodgers left the coast of Norway and sailed southward, cruising for a time to the northward of Scotland with a view to intercepting the northern trade of the enemy bound in and out of the Irish channel. He now captured three prizes: the ship "Eliza Swan," 8 guns; the bark "Lion," 8 guns; and the brig "Alert." He ransomed the ship and bark and sent them to England as cartels, loaded with prisoners. Hearing that the British had a superior force on the lookout for him, the commodore decided to change his cruising-grounds. Passing to the westward of the British Isles, he proceeded to the Banks of Newfoundland, near which he made two more captures: the brig "Shannon," bound from St. Kitts to London and laden with rum, sugar, and molasses; and the brig "Fly," 6 guns, bound from Jamaica to London, with a cargo of coffee. He sent the two prizes to the United States.

As the "President's" provisions were now nearly exhausted, the commodore was forced to return to port.

On September twenty-third, near Nantucket Shoals, he captured the British naval schooner "High Flyer," Lieutenant George Hutchinson, five guns, five officers, and thirty-four seamen. On sighting the "President" Hutchinson hoisted a signal. Knowing some of the enemy's signals, Rodgers replied in such a way as to mislead the British lieutenant, who taking the American vessel for the British frigate "Sea Horse," immediately bore down and hove to under her stern. Rodgers now sent one of his officers, disguised in a British uniform, on board the schooner. Hutchinson received him kindly and on request delivered to him the signal books of the "High Flyer." The credulous lieutenant then went on board the "President" or "Sea Horse" as he thought, and was shown to the commodore's cabin. He gave his supposed superior a copy of his orders from Admiral Warren, who, he said, was especially desirous of capturing the "President" and her commander. The commodore asked him what kind of a man Rodgers was. Hutchinson replied that he had never seen him, but that he had heard that he was an "odd fish and hard to catch." "Sir," said Rodgers, with startling emphasis, "do you know what vessel you are on board of?" "Why, yes, sir," he replied, "on board His Majesty's ship 'Sea Horse'." "Then, sir, you labor under a mistake," said Rodgers, "you are on board the United States frigate 'President,' and I am Commodore Rodgers." Hutchinson was completely mystified, and it was some time before he could realize that he had been deceived.<sup>29</sup>

From the documents that the commodore obtained from Hutchinson he rightly concluded that Newport

<sup>29</sup> Lossing, B. J. *Pictorial Field-book of the War of 1812* (New York, 1868), 735-736.

was more likely to be free of blockading vessels than Boston, off which place lay several ships of Admiral Warren's fleet. He therefore sailed for the Rhode Island port where he arrived safely on September twenty-sixth. Soon he proceeded up Narragansett Bay to Pawtucket and later to Providence, these towns being more secure from attack by British vessels than Newport.

Rodgers's third cruise had lasted almost five months. For the greater part of this time his officers and crew had subsisted on a scanty allowance of the roughest fare, but their health had been generally good. The "President" had captured twelve vessels and two hundred seventy-one prisoners. During 1813, only two other ships of war did better, the brig "Argus" in the British channel, and the frigate "Essex" in the South Pacific. Each of these ships, however, closed its career by falling into the hands of the enemy. A comparison of the "President's" work with that of the four other vessels that went to sea in 1813 is of interest. The "Congress" visited the southern part of the Atlantic and took four small prizes. The "Constitution" sailed too late in the year to make any captures. The "Chesapeake" soon after leaving Boston engaged the "Shannon" and after a gallant fight surrendered to her. The little "Enterprise" had a very successful cruise in which she captured the "Boxer." The bold dash of the "President" into the North Sea, however, gave more employment to British ships of war than the combined movements of all the other vessels. During July and August some eight or ten naval craft, including two seventy-fours, and several frigates were searching for her. The secretary of the navy justly congratulated the commodore on abstracting the attention of the enemy's navy, "to an

extent perhaps equal to the disproportion of our relative forces."

By the middle of November the commodore was again ready for sea. Owing to adverse winds and the presence of a British squadron near Block Island, he did not sail until the fourth of December. Fortunately he succeeded in eluding the vessels of the enemy that were watching for him. On the second day out he recaptured the American schooner "Comet," which had been lately taken by His Britannic Majesty's ships "Ramilies" and "Loire" and was bound to Halifax in charge of a prize crew. On December sixth, he discovered a British ship of war, but, knowing that he was near a squadron of the enemy, he refrained from chasing her. He, however, shortened sail and hove to with a view of offering battle, but the strange ship stood from him.

Rodgers now sailed for more southerly latitudes, shaping a course for the Canaries. Later, running down the fifteenth parallel, he proceeded to the West Indies. While on this latter course he fell in with the French frigates "Medura" and "Nymph," which he chased for a time, believing them to be English vessels. For several days he cruised to the windward of the Barbadoes along the routes of ships outward bound from England. Here early in January he captured the merchantmen "Wanderer," 7 guns, and "Edward," 6 guns, both of which he sank after divesting them of all valuable articles. On January sixteenth, he ran off Cayenne, thence proceeded down the coast of Surinam, Berbice, and Demerara, and thence northeastward to the south coast of Porto Rico, and on through the Mona Passage along the north side of the Bahamas to the Florida coast, which he sighted near St. Augustine.

On February fourth, the commodore captured the

British schooner "Jonathan," bound from Barbadoes to Amelia Island and laden with rum and dry goods. From Florida he proceeded northward on soundings along the Atlantic seaboard. Running into a blockading squadron on the coast of South Carolina, he tried to separate one of its ships from her consorts, but failed. Pursued finally by the whole fleet, he made his escape. Off the Delaware, during a foggy spell of weather, the commodore sighted a large vessel that appeared to be a ship of war. He shortened sail and cleared his ship for action; but on hearing signal guns he stood away, believing that he had run into another blockading squadron.

On February eighteenth, off Sandy Hook, Rodgers saw two British ships of war, one of which he made out to be a schooner. When the larger vessel cautiously approached him, he prepared for battle and stood towards her; thereupon she immediately retreated. The commodore suspected that she might be something more than a frigate. He, however, once more stood towards her; and she again retreated. A revenue cutter now overhauled him, bringing the information that his adversary was really a seventy-four. About this time a third British sail was discovered. Believing that the enemy's force was superior to his own, Rodgers crossed Sandy Hook bar and made the port. It later appeared that the revenue cutter was mistaken, and that the strangely acting vessel was the British frigate "Loire," 38, Captain Thomas Brown. Had the commodore forced an engagement, his chances of success would probably have been good, although we can not be certain of this as the "Loire" would have been aided by her two consorts.

Rodgers had now completed his fourth and last cruise

in the War of 1812. While his services had been less brilliant and picturesque than those of some of his fellow officers, they had yet been highly useful and creditable. The navy department freely expressed its appreciation of his work, and the people acclaimed him a naval hero—placing him on a pinnacle of fame somewhat below Hull, Perry, Macdonough, Decatur, and Bainbridge. Early in March, 1814, Tammany Hall gave a banquet in his honor, at which more than three hundred guests were present. During the festivities a song entitled "The Warrior's Return," which had been "hastily committed to paper," was sung. On this occasion Rodgers proposed a toast which was received with great applause and which later attained a wide popularity: "Peace; if it can be obtained without the sacrifice of national honor or the abandonment of maritime rights, otherwise, war until peace shall be secured without the sacrifice of either." After the banquet the commodore and several of his officers attended the Park Theater, where he was honored by an illumination and the exhibition of a large transparency displaying his likeness.

Later Rodgers was feasted at Barney's Inn, Baltimore, by the leading men of that city. Here he proposed the sentiment, "The citizens of Baltimore; as conspicuous for hospitality as for enterprise and patriotism." After he had withdrawn in accordance with the custom then prevailing, the presiding officer, who was the mayor of the city, gave the toast, "Commodore Rodgers; hated and feared by the enemy, revered and beloved by his countrymen."

The commodore's name often figured in the patriotic ballads inspired by the war, although somewhat less than the names of the more popular naval commanders.

One of these effusions entitled "Our Navy," after appropriate references to the gallant Hull and brave Decatur's dauntless breast, celebrated Rodgers's martial deeds in the following stanza:

"And Rodgers with his gallant crew,  
O'er the wide ocean ride,  
To prove their loyal spirits true,  
And crush old Albion's pride."

Commodore Rodgers was more or less disappointed with the results of his cruises in the "President"; and during the last year of the war was anxious to return to sea, believing that a kinder fortune would attend him. While he had taken one British ship of war, the schooner "High Flyer," he had not, like many of his brother officers, met the enemy in a fair fight, gun for gun. His juniors in rank had fought the sea duels of the war. His critics asserted that it was extraordinary that he should have traversed all parts of the Atlantic without finding an opportunity to bring his vessel advantageously into action. A comparison of Rodgers's services with those of his fellow commanders will not be without interest.

The three main objects of our cruisers at sea in the War of 1812 were (1) the spoliation of British commerce (2) the capture of the enemy's smaller ships of war and (3) the giving of employment to the enemy's vessels with a view to restricting their use on the American coast. The work of Rodgers as a destroyer of commerce compares most favorably with that of the other commanders. The average number of prizes (disregarding ships of war) taken by our naval vessels in 1812-1815 was 6.5; and by privateers 2.7.<sup>30</sup> The commodore captured twenty-five merchantmen, more than

<sup>30</sup> Mahan, A. T. *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812* (Boston, 1905), vol. ii, 242.

were taken by any other naval officer. Captain David Porter in the "Essex," Master-commandant W. H. Allen in the "Argus," and Master-commandant Lewis Warrington in the "Peacock," however, were not far below him in numbers, and in the value of their prizes were much above him.

During 1812-1813, the ships of war captured by our principal seagoing officers were as follows: "Guerrière," 38, by Hull; "Macedonian," 38, by Decatur; "Java," 38, by Bainbridge; "Alert," 18, by Porter; "Frolic," 18, by Jones; "Peacock," 18, by Lawrence; "Boxer," 14, by Burrows; "High Flyer," 5, by Rodgers; and none by Smith, Allen, and Crane. It is thus seen that the commodore stands near the foot of the list, although none of the more fortunate officers captured more vessels than did he. Rodgers, however, did not lose a vessel during the war; while Decatur lost the "President," Lawrence the "Chesapeake," Porter the "Essex," Jones the "Wasp," and Allen the "Argus." The navy department ascribed Rodgers's failure to engage a ship worthy of his metal to the want of opportunity, and much may be said for this view. It would appear, however, that the commodore was more cautious than some of his naval colleagues, and that in one or two instances his caution led him into error and lost him a capture. On the other hand one should remember that owing to our naval weakness it was not good policy to risk our ships in a fight unless there was a fair chance of success. The loss of a single American vessel meant the decimation of our effective seagoing force; while all the vessels that we captured were scarcely missed by the British whose fleet consisted of seven hundred and thirty craft. In 1813 the secretary of the navy wrote: "It is not even good policy to meet an equal, unless under



special circumstances where a great object is to be gained without a great sacrifice. His commerce is our true game, for there he is indeed vulnerable."

In furnishing employment to the enemy's cruisers at sea, Rodgers was by all odds the most successful officer of the war. Better than any other commander, he understood the broad principles of naval strategy. His naval plans were based upon combination, concentration, and coöperation; while those of his juniors depended upon division, diffusion, and individual effort. After the department had divided its little fleet into small units, the commodore, whenever it was possible, sailed in company with other ships in order to lead the enemy to believe that he was operating in squadron. His bold cruise to the north of England gave employment to a considerable fleet of British cruisers and received the personal attention of the Admiralty, which dispatched in search of him so distinguished an officer as Rear-admiral Lord Amelius Beauclerk. The voyage of Rodgers's fleet in the summer of 1812 to the coast of Europe, which forced the enemy to concentrate his ships on the North Atlantic station thereby enabling our trade to reach its home ports in safety, has been referred to by Admiral Mahan in the following striking language: "Professionally, the cruise of Rodgers's squadron, unsuccessful in outward seeming, was a much more significant event and much more productive than the capture of the 'Guerrière' by the 'Constitution'."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mahan, A. T. *From Sail to Steam* (New York, 1907), 5-6.



## XI. SERVICES AT PHILADELPHIA, WASHINGTON, AND BALTIMORE: 1814-1815

SOON after Rodgers in February, 1814, completed his fourth cruise of the War of 1812, the secretary of the navy offered him his choice of four commands: the "President," refitting for sea at New York; the frigate "Guerrière," almost ready to be launched, at Philadelphia; the frigate "Java," under construction at Baltimore; and a new seventy-four, under construction at Philadelphia. Believing that the "Guerrière" had the best chance for getting to sea at an early date, Rodgers chose that vessel. About the middle of March, he left New York and went to Washington to confer with the secretary of the navy, stopping on his way at Havre de Grace to visit his family, which he had not seen since the war began. He now had three children, Robert S., Frederick, and John. The eldest, Robert S., was five years old; the youngest, John (the Rear-admiral John Rodgers of the Civil War) was less than two years of age, having been born in 1812, while the commodore was at sea on his first cruise of the war.

In 1813, while Rodgers was at sea on his third cruise, Havre de Grace was pillaged and burned by a detachment of British seamen and marines belonging to the fleet of Admiral Warren. The commodore's house was set on fire and many of its valuable articles were stolen or destroyed. His mother, wife, and two sisters (Mrs. William Pinkney and Mrs. Howes Goldsborough) fled to the house of Mark Pringle, a wealthy gentleman who lived near the village. They had no sooner reached

their place of refuge, than a small division of the enemy made its appearance, having been detailed to destroy Pringle's handsome residence. Mrs. Goldsborough interceded with the officer in command, begging him not to burn the house, and particularly urging him to relent for the sake of her aged mother who was within. "The officer replied that he acted under the admiral, and it would be necessary to obtain his consent. Mrs. G. returned with the officer and detachment and obtained permission that the house should be spared. But when she reached it, she found it on fire, and met two men, one with a sheet and the other with a pillow-case crammed full coming out, which she could not then notice, but ran up stairs and found a large wardrobe standing in the passage all in flames. William Pinkney, who was with her, and two of the marines by great exertion saved the house. But some of the wretches after that took the cover from the sofa in the front room and put coals in it and it was in flames before it was discovered. A beautiful Madonna, which the commodore had been offered one thousand dollars for, they were about destroying, but the admiral ordered them to desist, at which they were so angry that they wrapped it up in the sofa-cover and left it as a mark of their valor."<sup>32</sup>

On returning from Washington in the spring of 1814, the commodore again stopped at Havre de Grace. Here in the latter part of April he received orders from the department to take command of the "Guerrière" at Philadelphia, whither he soon proceeded. This vessel was named in honor of Hull's famous prize, the British frigate "Guerrière." She was built by Naval Constructor Joseph Francis Grice. Her dimensions were length one hundred seventy-five feet, beam forty-four

<sup>32</sup> Niles's *Weekly Register*, vol. iv, 196.

and a half feet, and depth of hold twenty-one feet. Her burden was fifteen hundred eight tons. She was rated as a forty-four, but she mounted fifty-three guns: thirty-three long 24's and twenty 42-pound carronades. Her long guns were made at the Cecil furnace near Havre de Grace, and her carronades at Dorsey's foundry near Baltimore. Her complement of boarders was two hundred men. She was launched without accident on June 20, 1814, in the presence of some fifty thousand spectators assembled on shore and on board various craft in the Delaware.

During the summer of 1814, the commodore was employed chiefly at Philadelphia in completing his ship. Other important duties, however, fell to him at this time. Early in May he succeeded Commodore Alexander Murray, the senior officer of the navy, as commander of the Delaware flotilla, to which fleet were transferred the crew and several officers of the "*Guerrière*." Lieutenant C. W. Morgan was ordered by Rodgers to take charge of the flotilla and reorganize it, being given specific directions respecting his duties. No officer was to sleep on shore. Guard was to be rowed regularly. Each vessel was to be fully supplied with ball and powder. The cannon and small arms were to be exercised daily, the weather permitting. Lines of battle and retreat by all possible modes, such as anchoring, sailing, and rowing, were to be formed. Morgan had his headquarters at Newcastle, Delaware; while those of the commodore were at Philadelphia.

The Delaware flotilla was one of several little fleets that were maintained at the chief ports of the Union to defend the maritime frontier. It comprised about twenty small craft—gunboats, barges, galleys, block-sloops, etc. It did picket duty for the forts near Philadelphia,

and also prevented the British ships from passing up the bay or sending marauding parties to shore. Although it was not strong enough to take the offensive against the blockading vessels of the enemy off the capes, it occasionally attempted to drive some of his ships out of the bay. On June nineteenth, Rodgers's old acquaintance, the frigate "Belvidera," entered the mouth of the Delaware and captured a small schooner near Cape Henlopen. On learning of her movements, Morgan immediately proceeded towards the scene of disturbance, and Rodgers made preparations to join him with reinforcements from the "Guerrière." Before the flotilla reached the lower bay, however, the "Belvidera" left it, having ransomed the schooner for eight hundred dollars.

The commodore's presence at Philadelphia and his command of some five hundred sailors and marines on the Delaware led to his participation in the defense of the Chesapeake in the summer and fall of 1814, when the British operations in that quarter assumed great importance.

In the spring of that year, our naval force on the Chesapeake consisted almost entirely of a fleet of gunboats under Commodore Joshua Barney, of Revolutionary fame. In the early summer Barney established his headquarters at the mouth of the Patuxent, some twenty-five miles above the Potomac. His further passage down the bay was blocked by a strong British squadron near the Capes of Virginia. Early in 1814, Vice-admiral J. B. Warren was succeeded in command of the British North Atlantic station by Vice-admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane. The new commander soon began a coast warfare, undertaken partly in retaliation for outrages committed by American soldiers in Canada and partly

as a diversion to prevent our government from sending reinforcements to the northern frontier.

On the night of July eleventh, a detachment of small craft from Cochrane's fleet appeared at Elkton, Maryland, at the head of the Chesapeake Bay, and attacked a party of militia under the command of General T. M. Forman, who succeeded in repulsing the British. Expecting their return on the following night, Forman dispatched a courier to Rodgers requesting his assistance. The commodore at once ordered Lieutenant Morgan to proceed with all haste to the relief of Forman with two hundred fifty officers and seamen and two pieces of heavy artillery. So well did Morgan execute his orders that he marched from Newcastle to Elkton, a distance of fifteen or twenty miles, in a little less than four hours, notwithstanding the night was dark and rainy and the roads exceedingly bad. The enemy, however, did not return to the attack. The detachment of sailors, with the exception of a few that were sent to Havre de Grace to guard the Cecil furnace, soon returned to its station on the Delaware. Rodgers's zeal and promptitude on this occasion was duly appreciated and highly approved by Secretary of the Navy William Jones, who had now succeeded Paul Hamilton in the navy office at Washington. This incident led the commodore to organize a corps of seamen for service in similar emergencies at the head of the Chesapeake.

About the middle of August, Admiral Cochrane, who had assembled in the lower Chesapeake twenty vessels of war and a large train of transports and storeships, began the movement that resulted in the burning of Washington. On the eighteenth a large division of his forces entered the Patuxent, and on the following day an army of forty-five hundred men, under the command

of General Robert Ross, was landed twenty-five miles from the mouth of the river. On the twentieth a fleet of boats commanded by Rear-admiral George Cockburn ascended the Patuxent in search of Barney's flotilla, while the troops took up their march abreast of it on shore.

This ominous movement frightened our lukewarm government into taking measures for the defense of the capital. On August nineteenth, the secretary of the navy ordered Commodore Rodgers and Commodore Porter (the latter being at New York) to proceed toward Washington with detachments of the sailors and marines under their command. "The enemy," he wrote to Rodgers, "has entered the Patuxent with a very large force, indicating a design upon this place, which may be real or it may serve to mask his design upon Baltimore. In either case it is exceedingly desirable to collect in our vicinity all the disposable force within reach as soon as possible. You will therefore with the least possible delay proceed to Baltimore with about three hundred men (including officers) of the force under your command, and also order on the detachment of marines from Cecil furnace to meet you in Baltimore where the further orders of the Department await you."

The secretary sent Rodgers's orders by mail; but, owing to some irregularity in the post office, they were not delivered in Philadelphia until ten o'clock in the morning of August twenty-second. As he was spending the day at Reedy Island, fifteen miles below Newcastle, inspecting the flotilla, he did not receive his orders until 11 p.m., when he was returning to the city. Retracing his steps, he arrived at Newcastle at sunrise of the twenty-third, and at once made preparations to proceed southward with his men. Expecting the com-



modore to reach Baltimore on the evening of the twenty-third, the secretary on the morning of that day sent orders to that city directing him to march to Bladensburg (five miles from Washington) with the "utmost possible celerity." As the commodore did not reach Elkton, some fifty miles from Baltimore until midnight of the twenty-third, he failed to receive his superior's commands until too late to execute them.

By August twenty-fourth, the British forces under Ross and Cockburn had moved up the Patuxent, had forced Barney to burn his flotilla, and had advanced toward the capital. On the afternoon of that day they defeated the Americans under General Winder and Commodore Barney at Bladensburg, and in the evening entered Washington. Twenty-four hours later, having burnt the Capitol, the Executive Mansion, and the department buildings, they withdrew from the city and returned to the Patuxent. On the twenty-fourth soon after the Americans were defeated at Bladensburg, President Madison, Secretary of the Navy Jones, and several other leading officials of the government fled up the Potomac and for several days remained in hiding.

While Jones was seeking his safety in the countryside, Rodgers, who was temporarily left without orders, found employment in Baltimore, where he arrived on the twenty-fifth. The Baltimoreans were panic stricken, believing that their city was doomed to suffer the fate that had befallen Washington. The opportune arrival of the commodore incited their courage, and the energetic measures of defense that he at once took restored their confidence. Rodgers united his command with Porter's and with that of a small flotilla on the Patapsco, and organized the combined forces, consisting of upwards of a thousand sailors and marines, into

a brigade, which he divided into two regiments, placing one under Commodore Porter and the other under Commodore O. H. Perry (the latter being stationed at Baltimore to superintend the construction of the frigate "Java"). He also conferred with General Winder and planned to coöperate with him in defending the city. The commodore's work at Baltimore was his first experience in soldiering. Its comical aspect did not escape him. "If you were to see what a figure I cut with spurs on," he wrote to Mrs. Rodgers, "accompanied by my aides and gig-men on horseback, you'd split your sides a laughing."

Soon after the return of the secretary of the navy to Washington, the enemy gave the capital a second scare, this time approaching it by way of the Potomac. On August twenty-seventh, a small British squadron, consisting of two frigates and five smaller vessels, under the command of Captain James A. Gordon, reached Fort Washington, a defense twelve miles below the capital on the Potomac. The officer in command of the fort abandoned it without making any resistance, and Gordon proceeded to Alexandria (seven miles from the seat of government), which place, together with twenty-one vessels and a large quantity of stores, fell into his hands on August twenty-ninth. Gordon remained here three days loading his ships with the captured booty. On receiving orders to join his admiral, he set sail down the river, but was detained by adverse winds near Fort Washington.

Gordon's movements greatly alarmed the secretary of the navy, and caused him to take measures for the defense of the capital, fearing that the enemy again had designs upon it. On August twenty-ninth, he ordered Rodgers to proceed to Bladensburg from Baltimore

with six hundred fifty picked seamen and marines. Already, on the day previous, the commodore had ordered Porter to march to Washington with one hundred seamen, "more with a view to guard the executive than any thing else." Porter arrived at the capital on the thirtieth; and Rodgers, accompanied by Perry, at Bladensburg on the next day. On the afternoon of the thirty-first, the commodore and the secretary of the navy conferred together and agreed on a plan for harassing the retreating enemy. Each of the three commodores was assigned special duties. Porter was to dispute Gordon's passage by means of some batteries which he was ordered to erect a few miles below Mount Vernon, on the Virginia side of the Potomac, at a place called White House; Perry was to operate against the enemy from Indian Head, Maryland, some ten miles below White House; and Rodgers was to annoy the retreating fleet in the rear with fire-ships.

It should be said by way of explanation that fire-ships were made by loading old hulls with inflammables, and were designed to set fire to vessels by direct contact with them. Rodgers improvised his means of destruction at the Washington navy-yard. On the morning of September third he proceeded down the Potomac in his gig, closely followed by his miniature fleet consisting of three fire-ships and four barges. The latter were manned by about sixty seamen, armed with muskets. The principal officers accompanying the expedition were Lieutenants Newcomb and Forrest, Sailing-master Ramage, and Master's Mate Stockton. At Alexandria, finding no colors displayed, with the exception of a Swedish ensign on board a schooner, Rodgers ordered the American flag to be hoisted. When within half a mile of the enemy, who was discovered at anchor near Fort Washing-

ton, the fire-ships were ignited and set adrift. They floated down stream towards the British fleet. But owing to the failure of the wind and the prompt efforts of the enemy's rowboats, which met the fire-ships and towed them away from the fleet, they did no damage. Several of the rowboats pursued Rodgers's barges and forced them to retreat up the Potomac. On reaching Alexandria, the commodore took possession of the town, and made preparations for its defense by mounting some cannon on the wharf and by organizing a company composed of his sailors and a detachment of Virginia militia. As Gordon had left behind him a considerable quantity of stores ready to be shipped, it was feared that he might return to the city.

On the fourth, Rodgers ordered Lieutenant Newcomb to proceed down the river with a flotilla, consisting of four barges and a lighter, and attack a bomb-ship of the enemy that lay near Fort Washington. On approaching the bomb-ship, Newcomb discovered that a British frigate was anchored close by, and he was compelled to abandon the expedition. After reconnoitering the British vessels for some time, he took a position on the Maryland side of the river, hauled the barges on shore, anchored the lighter, and stationed the barge-men on a high cliff. At 11 p.m., he was attacked by several of the enemy's boats, and after engaging them for about twenty minutes forced them to retire. On the morning of the fifth the barges again approached the British fleet, which was then retreating down the river, and set adrift another fire-ship; but, as on the previous occasion, the enemy was not harmed and his boats forced the barges to retreat. This incident ended the commodore's operations on the Potomac.

Porter's forces comprised a detachment of sailors and

marines and some volunteer companies of militia. For several days his batteries exchanged shots with some of the vessels of the enemy that were in advance of the main fleet. On September fifth, when Gordon, taking advantage of a favorable wind, ran past White House, Porter engaged the enemy for more than an hour before the heavy guns of the two British frigates compelled him to abandon his batteries. Porter lost twenty-nine men, killed or wounded; the loss of Gordon was probably about the same. On the evening of the fifth, Commodore Perry at Indian Head engaged the British ships for an hour, at the end of which time he retired, having one man wounded. The total loss of the enemy during his movement down the Potomac was seven killed and thirty-five wounded.

While these events were taking place on the Potomac, the fleet under Cochrane was preparing to move up the Chesapeake and attack Baltimore. On September third, Secretary Jones, becoming anxious for the safety of that city, ordered Rodgers to return to it at once, since his immediate presence there was necessary to forward the preparations for its defense and animate its citizens, "who," Jones wrote, "rely with perfect confidence upon the efficiency of your force and upon your individual influence, skill, and industry." A division of the commodore's command left straightway for the Patapsco, and it was soon followed by the remaining divisions and by the detachments of Porter and Perry. The following note taken from the *National Intelligencer* describes the departure of Porter and his men from the capital on the evening of September sixth: "Fourteen wagons-full of our noble seamen, the first surmounted with the well-known standard of 'Free Trade and Sailors' Rights,' the whole preceded by the Hero of

Valparaiso and cheered by their boatswain's whistle, passed through this city on their way to Baltimore Tuesday evening."

On Rodgers's arrival at Baltimore he again assumed command of the seamen and marines that were assembled for the defense of the city, coöperating with General Samuel Smith, the commander of the militia, Major George Armistead, the commander of Fort McHenry, and the Baltimore Committee of Vigilance and Safety. Through the commodore's efforts the channel of the Patapsco on both sides of Fort McHenry was obstructed by the sinking of old hulks. For a week before the arrival of the British he worked indefatigably, building breastworks, planting batteries, and drilling seamen. He spent much time on horseback visiting his widely-separated commands. His aides were Master's Mate R. F. Stockton, who later became distinguished for his operations on the California coast in the war with Mexico, and a Mr. Allen, a brother of Captain W. H. Allen who was killed in the action between the "Argus" and "Pelican"; and his principal officers were Master-commandant Robert T. Spence, Lieutenants Thomas Gamble, Solomon Rutter, Henry S. Newcomb, Solomon Frazier, and Joseph L. Kuhn (of the marines), and Sailing-masters Webster and Rodman. Porter returned to New York soon after his arrival in Baltimore, and Perry owing to illness did not receive a command.

Rodgers's sailors, though fearless, and eager for a fight, were rather awkward on their land-legs. Each day they were put through a series of military maneuvers, an exercise whose humorous incidents they greatly enjoyed. An observer of one of their drills relates that the commanding officer had much difficulty in preventing his ranks from crinkling into half-moons. In con-

formity with sea practice, the sailors would reply audibly to their orders. "Attention!" the officer would exclaim. "Aye, aye, sir," came from every man. That the order "to charge" might be understood by his sailors, the officer explained that it was the same as "to board." "Here they were at home. Their eyes glistened. Every fellow gathered up his sinews to his utmost strength and waited with profound silence for the word. It was given, and on they came with fearful impetuosity, every one striving to get foremost. It happened that a horse and cart was in the way. Several of the spectators had retreated behind it. But the sailors came jumping over it like squirrels, and dashing among them, made them fly off at full speed to the great delight of the seamen and amidst peals of laughter from all that were looking on. Never, perhaps, since time began was there a more efficient body of men than the crew, as seamen. Nor did it appear possible that as sailors they could be better drilled to the business of a ship. But as soldiers, except in courage that knew no fear and a zeal that anticipated no check, they were the queerest and most odd set of fellows that ever were collected together."

Baltimore is most accessible from the Chesapeake by way of either Patapsco Neck or the Patapsco River. Patapsco Neck is a narrow body of land, about fifteen miles long, lying between the Patapsco and Back Rivers. The Patapsco River lies to the southward of the neck, and extends from the city toward the bay in an east-southeasterly direction. The upper part of the river consists of a northern and a southern arm, called, respectively, the Basin and the Ferry Branch. They unite about two miles and a half from the center of the city. On the apex of land formed by their confluence is sit-

uated Fort McHenry, the chief defense of the harbor. In September, 1814, the fort was occupied by about one thousand men, under the command of Major George Armistead, of the United States Artillery. The city of Baltimore lay at the head of the Basin. The principal land defenses, consisting of intrenchments, redoubts, and batteries, were hastily constructed on the hills about a mile to the eastward of the city, and were designed to stop the enemy advancing by way of Patapsco Neck.

The major part of Rodgers's force was stationed on the Patapsco. A fleet of twelve small naval craft, manned by about three hundred sixty men and commanded by Lieutenant Rutter, guarded the entrance to the Basin. East of Fort McHenry, on the opposite side of the Basin, at a place called the Lazaretto, there was a battery in charge of Lieutenant Frazier. The water battery of the fort was commanded by Sailing-master Rodman. A mile to the rear of the fort, at the head of the Ferry Branch, were Forts Covington and Babcock, which formed the second line of defense for the harbor. They were commanded, respectively, by Lieutenant Newcomb and Sailing-master Webster. The minor part of Rodgers's force, consisting of about two hundred seamen and marines, manned several batteries on Hampstead or Loudenslager's Hill, to the eastward of the city. It was here that Rodgers had his headquarters. The principal battery, known as Rodgers's Bastion, was in charge of Lieutenant Gamble. Its site is now an historic spot in Patterson Park, Baltimore. The old earthworks are still well preserved, and in recent years they have been given a warlike appearance by mounting on them some ancient cannon.

On September eleventh, the British fleet arrived at



the mouth of the Patapsco; and on the morning of the twelfth its commander, Admiral Cochrane, having planned to attack the city simultaneously by land and water, disembarked some four thousand men, under General Ross, at North Point on Patapsco Neck, about fourteen miles from Baltimore. Having advanced about five miles, Ross encountered a division of the American army, numbering some thirty-two hundred men and commanded by General Stricker. A spirited action now took place, which resulted in the defeat of the Americans, though they suffered less than the British. General Ross was killed. His successor, Colonel Arthur Brooke, camped for the night on the battlefield, and on the morning of the thirteenth resumed the march toward Baltimore. Owing to the obstructions placed in the way of the British army by the retreating Americans, it did not come in sight of the city until evening. Forcibly impressed by the formidable defenses that met his view, Brooke decided not to advance until he received news from the fleet, which was to support him.

Soon after landing the troops on the morning of the twelfth, Admiral Cochrane sailed up the Patapsco River. At daybreak of the thirteenth, five bomb-ships and a rocket-ship began to bombard Fort McHenry, having approached about two miles from the fort, and being supported by several frigates and sloops placed in their rear. Armistead and Frazier immediately opened fire upon the enemy; but, finding that their cannon balls fell short, soon ceased firing. In the afternoon four of the bomb-ships came within range, and the Americans resumed their fire and forced them to retire, slightly injuring two of the vessels. All day and night Cochrane kept up an almost incessant bombardment. He was un-

able, however, to do much damage to the fort, which lost only twenty-eight men.

At 1 a.m. on the fourteenth the British sent twenty armed boats up the Ferry Branch. As the night was exceedingly dark, about half of them lost their way and had to return. The rest passed by Fort McHenry without being seen. On nearing the head of the branch, their advance was arrested by Rodgers's sailors at Forts Covington and Babcock. When the enemy's headmost vessel began firing, Lieutenant Newcomb, the commander of Fort Covington, returned the fire, and was soon joined by Fort Babcock. "The darkness prevented our distinguishing his force," Newcomb wrote in his official report of the engagement. "One bomb-vessel was this side the Point, a schooner about half-way between her and Fort Covington, and the barges (number unknown, throwing twelve, eighteen and twenty-four pound shot) abreast of us. Our fire was directed at the headmost. A few broadsides checked their advance, when they concentrated nearly abreast of us and continued their attack on the batteries. The decided superiority of our fire compelled them to retreat, when they were met by a fire from Fort McHenry, which, however, from the darkness of the night was soon discontinued." One of the enemy's barges was sunk, and several men were killed.

That same morning, the British vessels, having made no impression upon Fort McHenry and the supporting batteries, discontinued the bombardment, weighed anchor, and stood down the river. On the previous night Cochrane had communicated to Brooke the failure of the fleet and the impossibility of its aiding the army, and the two commanders decided that under these circumstances an attack on the land defenses was not feasible.

Brooke therefore returned to North Point with his troops and embarked them on board the vessels of the fleet. In accounting for the failure of his expedition, Cochrane laid much stress upon the barrier of vessels sunk by Rodgers at the mouth of the Basin, saying that, had it not been for these obstructions, he would not have let go an anchor until he had attempted to pass Fort McHenry and enter the harbor.

During the advance of the enemy, Rodgers, it would seem, remained at Hampstead Hill in close proximity to his batteries there. By means of his aides he communicated with his detachments on the Patapsco. For a time he practically directed the first regiment of Maryland militia, which was formed in column in the rear of his batteries on the hill; and a battalion of Pennsylvania riflemen, under Major Randall, which he ordered on the night of the thirteenth to march to the Lazaretto and dislodge a party of the enemy. Stockton, who accompanied the battalion, reported that the major and his men displayed great zeal and gallantry in the performance of their duties. The commodore in his official letter to the secretary of the navy describing his work at Baltimore wrote in complimentary terms of all his commanding officers, praising especially Newcomb, Webster, Frazier, Rutter, Rodman, and Stockton. He said that Commodore Perry, although indisposed and worn with fatigue, came to the defenses at Hampstead Hill when the British were approaching and offered to render every assistance in his power.

Rodgers's services to Baltimore during those anxious days when the city was menaced with destruction were long held in grateful remembrance by her citizens, some of whom were wont to ascribe the preservation of their lives and homes largely to his efforts. More than once

General Samuel Smith expressed his appreciation of the important services rendered by the commodore and his seamen. In his general orders to his army, Smith said, "It is with peculiar satisfaction that the commanding general seizes this opportunity of acknowledging the very great assistance he has received from the counsel and active services of Commodore Rodgers. His exertions and those of his brave officers and seamen have contributed in a very eminent degree to the safety of the city and should be remembered with lively emotions by every citizen."

After the close of the war, the council of Baltimore tendered the commodore a vote of thanks. Editor Hezekiah Niles presented him with a complete set of Niles's *Weekly Register*, "fancifully bound in the very best and most substantial manner." The leading citizens of Baltimore expressed their appreciation of the services of their fellow Marylander by giving him a handsome silver service of plate, consisting of fifty-two pieces and costing four thousand dollars. The service was made in Philadelphia and was "splendidly ornamented with borderings and embossed figures after the manner of the Egyptian and Grecian sculpturings." Each piece bore the inscription, "Presented by the citizens of Baltimore to Com. Rodgers in testimony of their high sense of the important aid afforded by him in the defense of Baltimore on the 12th and 13th of September, 1814." It was presented to him on the third anniversary of the bombardment of Fort McHenry and the battle of North Point. A brigade paraded on Hampstead Hill, and a dinner, attended by Rodgers and Armistead, was given at the fort. The commodore wrote Ex-secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, who was chairman of the committee charged with the purchase of the gift, a modest and

grateful letter of acknowledgement, from which the following paragraphs have been extracted:

"The elegant service of plate with which the citizens of Baltimore have been pleased through their committee this day to authorize you to present to me in testimony of the estimation with which their kindness has led them to view my feeble services in the defense of their city on the 12th and 13th of September, 1814, in repelling the combined attack of a powerful British fleet and formidable British army, is flattering to my feelings beyond my powers of language to express.

"That the brave officers, seamen, and marines whom I had the honor to command on that occasion did every thing in their power for the defense of your city which the peculiar nature of the service and their limited means would allow, is most true; and that their hearty coöperation and best feelings were united in its cause to those of your own gallant militia is equally certain. But, in receiving so flattering a testimonial of individual respect, I am constrained, by a sense of justice and a recollection of the prompt and judicious preparations of Major-General Smith, on whom the chief command devolved, and of the gallant conduct of the Baltimore militia forming the brigade of General Stricker which met the enemy in advance, added to the laudable zeal and determined perseverance of all others with whom I had the good fortune to be associated, to acknowledge that I ought to attribute this particular mark of the favor of the citizens of Baltimore rather to that patriotism and those generous feelings for which they have always been conspicuous than to any positive claim which the occasion gives me to so distinguished a token of their kindness."

Soon after the British retreated from Baltimore,

Rodgers, acting under the orders of General Smith, assumed command of Fort McHenry, as Major Armistead was too sick to remain longer at his post. The commodore was in charge of the fort for only a few days—long enough, however, to perform one interesting duty, the ordering of a salute to be fired in honor of Commodore Macdonough's victory on Lake Champlain. On September nineteenth, Secretary Jones, fearing that the British would next move on Philadelphia, directed Rodgers to return at once with his seamen and marines to the Delaware. On the next day he collected his men and began his march northward. He arrived at Newcastle on the twenty-third, after an absence from his station of one month.

During the rest of the fall and the early winter the commodore was employed in equipping the "*Guerrière*" and superintending the work of the Delaware flotilla. In December he purchased the brig "*Prometheus*," which was to serve as a tender to his ship. In January, 1815, he relinquished the command of the flotilla, and visited his family at Havre de Grace, expecting soon to go to sea. The ice in the Delaware, however, delayed his sailing. Early in February news of the signing of the treaty of Ghent arrived in the United States, and the war was at an end. Already the secretary of the navy had the commodore in mind for an important administrative office in Washington, but that is another story and belongs to the succeeding chapter.

## XII. PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF NAVY COMMISSIONERS: 1815-1824

THE war of 1812 caused a rapid expansion of both the personnel and the material of the navy. The number of officers of the higher ranks in 1815 was more than double the number in 1811; the captains had increased from thirteen to thirty, the masters-commandant from nine to seventeen, and the lieutenants from seventy to one hundred forty-six. Nineteen officers had been promoted to be captains. Of these, the most noted were Porter, Lawrence, Jacob Jones, Morris, O. H. Perry, Macdonough, Warrington, Biddle, and Blakely. Lawrence was killed in action and Blakely went down with his vessel—the only two officers of the highest rank lost in the war. Murray and Rodgers were still at the head of the captains' list, and next to them in order were Barron, Bainbridge, Campbell, Decatur, Tingey, Stewart, Hull, and Chauncey. Only three officers of the old Revolutionary school were left, Murray, Campbell, and Tingey. The last of these, Tingey, died in 1829.

During the War of 1812 the number of naval ships rapidly increased, and the annual naval expenditures rose from \$1,970,000 to \$8,660,000. Before the war, the navy had few friends among the people or among the members of the dominant political party. By 1815, however, a succession of glorious naval victories and the newly awakened spirit of nationalism had brought about a complete change in public sentiment. The navy had become exceedingly popular, and the Republicans, who

had once threatened to abolish it, had become its zealous advocates. Both parties were now agreed in regarding it as a permanent institution that must be fostered, improved, and enlarged.

The problems of naval management always assume importance during periods of hostilities. At such times administrative defects and abuses offend the national pride, do the most harm, and call loudest for correction. A navy department, quite adequate during peace, often proves to be seriously wanting in war when additional and unusual duties are to be performed. The mobilizing and directing of the fleet in accordance with the principles of naval strategy put the department to the severest test.

The War of 1812 was no sooner begun than certain serious defects in our navy system were brought to light. One of its shortcomings was the lack of technical men in the navy department. The secretary and all of his assistants were civilians, and were therefore more or less ignorant of the naval profession. President Madison decided to remedy this defect. He, therefore, when during the war a vacancy occurred in the secretaryship, invited a naval officer to fill it, Commodore John Rodgers. Preferring active service at sea to the chief administrative post on shore, the commodore declined the office.

During the war another plan for adding a professional element to the department was proposed and was approved by both the president and Congress. On February 7, 1815, a board of navy commissioners was established by law. It was to be composed of three post-captains of the navy, who were to be appointed by the president, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. It was to be attached to the office of the secre-



tary of the navy; and it was to perform all the ministerial duties of the department relating to the procuring of naval stores and materials, and to the construction, armament, equipment, and employment of the ships of war, "as well as all other matters connected with the naval establishment." Nothing in the act, however, was to be construed to take from the secretary of the navy his control and direction of the naval forces.

As soon as the law of February 7, 1815, was passed, Madison decided to make Rodgers president of the board. On February eighth, Secretary of the Navy G. W. Crowninshield, who had succeeded Secretary Jones in the department, wrote to the commodore offering him a place on the navy board and requesting him to suggest, in case he would not accept the office, three naval captains whom "it would be most proper to take so as to do the most benefit to the service and to create the least uneasiness among the officers." What Rodgers wrote concerning his own acceptance is not known, but that part of his reply which relates to the qualifications of his fellow captains has been published and is therefore accessible. His characterization of the leading officers of the War of 1812 is of sufficient interest to warrant its quotation:

"Commodore ———, although an amiable old gentleman, has not been regularly bred to the profession of a seaman; his pretensions therefore as a navy officer are of a very limited description. Captain Bainbridge is an excellent officer, uniting much practice with considerable theory; he is also industrious, and if there is any objection to him, it is because he feels the importance of his own abilities too sensibly to qualify him as well as he otherwise would be for a subordinate situation. Captain Campbell is a good old gentleman, but is fond

of novelty, and at the same time an enemy to everything that is likely to call the reflections of his mind into operation. Captains Decatur, Stewart, Warrington, and Blakely being at sea, I feel it unnecessary to say anything concerning their pretensions.

“Captain Chauncey is an excellent officer, but I consider him better qualified for a command at sea. Captain Shaw, although an amiable man, is by no means qualified for anything requiring the exercise of more than an ordinary share of intellect. Captain Porter is a man of far more than ordinary natural talents, indefatigable in whatever he undertakes; and added to these, his acquirements, professional as well as more immediately scientific, are respectable. Captain Dent, although his opportunities of gaining professional knowledge have been considerable, nevertheless wants stability of character. Captain Gordon is a good seaman and qualified for a command at sea; but his opinions are too flexible to qualify him. Captain Perry, as you well know, is a good officer; but I do not believe he has ever paid so much attention to naval service as to qualify him for such a situation. Captain Macdonough is an officer of similar merit. Captain Morris is a man of strong discriminating mind, of considerable science, and unites perhaps as much, if not more, theoretical and practical knowledge than any man of his age in the service.

“Captain Jones is a good officer; and, though a man of far more than ordinary general information, he does not possess the particular kinds to qualify him. Captain Crane is a good seaman and an intelligent man; but he is better qualified to command a ship than anything else. Captain Bainbridge, the junior, I do not think qualified for any command, as I have reason to believe

him intemperate, and I am induced to mention this that you may be guarded against giving him a command at sea. Captain Hull I had almost forgot to mention. He is nevertheless a man of most amiable disposition; and, although he does not pretend to much science, he is an excellent seaman and at the same time he unites all the most essential qualifications necessary for such a situation. Were I authorized to nominate the three captains to assist in the discharge of the duties of the department, I should name Bainbridge, Hull, and Morris; otherwise, Hull, Porter, and Morris.”<sup>33</sup>

On receiving the reply of the commodore, who was at Philadelphia in command of the “*Guerrière*,” Crowninshield ordered him to come immediately to Washington. After the president and the secretary of the navy had consulted with him, they chose Rodgers, Hull, and Porter as navy commissioners. These three officers were nominated on February twenty-seventh, and confirmed and commissioned on the following day. Having conferred with his superiors at Washington, the commodore returned to his ship at Philadelphia, which was now under orders to sail for New York. In March, he dropped down to Newcastle, and early in April he resigned his command to Lieutenant C. W. Morgan and proceeded again to the seat of government. Here on April twentieth, he received his commission as commissioner of the navy, which read as follows:

“James Madison—President of the United States of America—To all who shall see these Presents, Greeting: Know Ye, That in pursuance of an Act of Congress, entitled ‘an act to alter and amend the several acts for establishing a Navy Department by adding thereto a Board of Commissioners,’ passed on the sev-

<sup>33</sup> Massachusetts Historical Society. *Proceedings*, second ser., vol. iv, 207-208.

enth day of February, one thousand eight hundred and fifteen, and of the special trust and confidence reposed in the patriotism, integrity, and abilities of John Rodgers, a Post-captain in the Navy of the United States, I have nominated, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, do appoint him a Commissioner of the board aforesaid, to have and to hold the said appointment, with all the powers, privileges, and emoluments, thereunto legally appertaining, during the pleasure of the President of the United States, for the time being."

On April 25, 1815, Rodgers, Hull, and Porter held a meeting in Washington, and, after reading their commissions, organized the board of navy commissioners. Rodgers, being the senior officer in rank, took his seat, in conformity to law, as president. The first duty of the board was the selection of a secretary and two clerks. Littleton W. Tazewell, of Norfolk, Virginia, was chosen secretary. He was a lawyer, and had served as judge advocate of the court martial that tried Commodore James Barron in 1808. Charles W. Goldsborough and Charles G. DeWitt were appointed clerks. Goldsborough was one of the most important officials of the navy department during the first half-century of its existence. He entered the department when it was founded in 1798, and, with the exception of a brief period during the War of 1812, served in it continuously until his death in 1843. He was the chief clerk of the department from 1802 to 1813, secretary of the navy board from 1823 to 1842, and chief of the bureau of provisions and clothing from 1842 to 1843. His two sons, Rear-admiral Louis M. Goldsborough and Commodore John Rodgers Goldsborough, were leading officers of the navy during the Civil War.

Littleton W. Tazewell declined the appointment of secretary to the commissioners, and James K. Paulding of New York, was chosen to fill the office. Paulding's career as a government official and as a literary man was a most notable one. He was a cousin of the revolutionary patriot, John Paulding, one of the captors of Major John André; and a brother-in-law of William Irving, who was a brother of Washington Irving. In 1807, Paulding and the two Irvings began the publication of the famous *Salmagundi*, a series of articles wittily setting forth the follies of the day. For half a century he wrote various novels, poems, sketches, stories, and comedies that for a time had much vogue. During the War of 1812 some of his political writings caught the fancy of President Madison and led to his selection as secretary of the navy board. Resigning the secretaryship in 1823, he returned to New York and was soon made navy agent at that port, an office that he held until President Van Buren made him secretary of the navy in 1838. Paulding was an intimate friend of Commodore Rodgers, with whom he corresponded after leaving the navy board.

For an office, the board rented a house of five rooms, paying for it three hundred dollars a year. Its exact location in Washington is not known. It was, however, somewhat remote from the office of the secretary of the navy, and was therefore inconveniently situated. In 1820, the commissioners obtained more satisfactory quarters in the old navy department building, which stood about two hundred yards west of the White House. This was a plain brick structure, one hundred sixty feet long and fifty-five feet wide. It was two stories in height, with a basement and attic. Throughout its length there was a broad hallway, with office rooms on

each side. The secretary of the navy and the commissioners occupied the second floor of this building. The office hours of the commissioners were from ten o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon, but when the duties of the board were pressing they were often extended.

Rodgers served as president of the board of navy commissioners for two terms of about nine and a half years each—in all for a little more than nineteen years. His first term lasted from April 25, 1815 to December 15, 1824. On the organization of the board, his fellow commissioners were Hull and Porter, as we have seen. Hull resigned his office in the summer of 1815 to become commandant of the Boston navy-yard, and was succeeded by Decatur who served until March, 1820, when he was killed in a duel by Commodore Barron. Stewart was appointed to fill the vacancy thus created. Preferring sea service, he was soon succeeded by Chauncey. Porter served on the board from 1815 until 1822, when he accepted the command of the West India squadron organized for the suppression of piracy. His successor was Commodore Morris.

In May, 1815, soon after the navy board was organized, the commissioners and the secretary of the navy had a serious contention over their respective spheres of duty, in which some feeling was manifested on each side. The act of February 7, 1815, establishing the board, was so loosely drawn that differences of opinion respecting its meaning easily arose. Crowninshield referred the dispute to President Madison for settlement. Awaiting his decision, the commissioners transacted no business for almost a month. The act, according to their interpretation of it, gave them large powers of control over both the personnel and the material of the



THE OLD NAVY DEPARTMENT BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C., *about 1860*  
From a negative by M. B. Brady





navy, and made them directly responsible to the president. Crowninshield contended that the board was vested with powers over only the naval material and was responsible to himself for all its acts. Madison's decision agreed in the main with the view of his secretary. In accordance therewith the commissioners took charge of the naval material—of the building, arming, and equipping of ships of war, the management of the navy-yards and naval stations, and the purchase of naval stores and provisions. In respect to the personnel of the navy, the commissioners exercised only advisory powers. The secretary attended to the detailing of officers, the directing of the movement of ships, and the ordering of naval courts. The work of the commissioners corresponded to that now performed by the bureaus of construction and repair, equipment, ordnance, yards and docks, and supplies and accounts. The commandants of the navy-yards, the naval constructors, and the navy agents reported to them.

The commissioners entered upon their duties with great zeal and energy. Long cognizant of the evils from which the navy had suffered and of the defects of naval administration, they brought forward a comprehensive program of naval reform and betterment. In 1799-1801, the Federalists had established navy-yards at Boston, Portsmouth, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Norfolk, and naval stations at Baltimore and Charleston. The commissioners decided that many of these establishments were either not needed or else they were improperly located; and they recommended that all of them, with the exception of the yard at Boston, be discontinued, and that proper sites for two new yards, one on the Chesapeake and the other on the Narragansett or thereabouts, be purchased. For the

Atlantic coast three yards, in their opinion, were sufficient.

The commissioners' program also provided for dry docks, naval hospitals, a naval academy, a national gun factory, and an ordnance department. They recommended the creation of the naval ranks of commodore and admiral, the dismissal from the navy of all incompetent officers, and the institution of a proper system of promotions based upon merit and experience. In their view the navy had been too rapidly increased during the late war. As a result it contained lieutenants who had not been to sea for a single day, and masters-commandant who had served only on gunboats and at navy-yards. Furthermore, too much of the practice of the navy, they said, had been left to the taste or fancy of each commander. What was needed was a complete system of rules and regulations. They also recommended the construction annually of one ship of the line, two frigates, and two sloops of war; the cutting and storing for the future needs of the navy of a large supply of naval timber; and the use of American-made copper, canvas, and hemp.

The adoption of all these reforms and improvements in a short time was not to be expected. Indeed many years elapsed before some of them were enacted into law. In several instances the fruit of the commissioners' agitation was gathered after the navy board was discontinued in 1842. A naval academy was not obtained until 1845, a weeding out of the officers until 1855, higher ranks until 1862, and a gun factory until 1886. The adoption of an adequate system of promotions is still under discussion. The commissioners were unable to effect a discontinuance of the old navy-yards and the purchase of more ample new ones. With this

in view they made an extensive survey of the Chesapeake in 1816. They did, however, obtain the construction of several dry docks and naval hospitals, the improvement of the naval ordnance, an increase of ships, and a new system of naval regulations.

Our first navy rules, which were drawn up in November, 1775, by John Adams when the Continental navy was being founded, were quite brief and were more or less general in character. Successive editions appeared from time to time until 1818, when the commissioners' rules were issued. These were extensive and detailed, and represented much laborious work on the part of their authors. They were in force for almost half a century, and they still form the basis of our present navy regulations. The commissioners' rules reduced to system and uniformity many naval practices that had previously varied with each officer or commander. Among other matters, they contained instructions respecting naval discipline, the duties of officers and the equipment of ships, and regulations for the government of the navy-yards. They prescribed the navy ration, allotting for each day of the week fixed quantities of the several articles composing the naval diet—suet, cheese, beef, pork, flour, bread, butter, peas, rice, sugar, tea, molasses, vinegar, and spirits. The daily allowance of spirits, that is of rum or whiskey, was fixed at half a pint. How detailed were the commissioners' prescription of official duties, a brief extract will show:

COOK

"1. He is to have charge of the steep tub, and is answerable for the meat put therein.

"2. He is to see the meat duly watered, and the provisions carefully and cleanly boiled and delivered to the men according to the practice of the navy.

"3. In stormy weather he is to secure the steep tub that it may not be washed overboard; but if it should be inevitably lost, the captain must certify as to the loss and the cook is to make oath as to the number of pieces so lost, that it may be allowed in the purser's account."

CHAPLAIN

"1. He is to read prayers at stated periods; perform all funeral ceremonies over such persons as may die in the service in the vessel to which he belongs; or, if directed by the commanding officer, over any person that may die in any other public vessel.

"2. He shall perform the duty of a schoolmaster, and to that end he shall instruct the midshipmen and volunteers in writing, arithmetic, and navigation, and in whatsoever may contribute to render them proficient. He is likewise to teach the other youths of the ship, according to such orders as he shall receive from the captain. He is to be diligent in his office.

"3. He shall, when it is required of him, perform the duties of secretary to the commodore."

Respecting the work of the midshipmen, the commissioners were unable to enter into details, since these nondescript officers might on occasion be called upon to perform almost any duty aboard ship. The midshipmen of the old navy were often mere youths eight or ten years old, or they might be young men well past their majority. From this rank have come many of our most celebrated officers. Admiral Farragut was a midshipman at nine years of age, and Admiral Porter at fourteen. All that can be learned of these picturesque, irresponsible, fun loving young gentlemen of the cockpit has a peculiar interest of its own. The commissioners' rules contain the following information respecting them:

"1. No particular duties can be assigned to this class of officers.

"2. They are promptly and faithfully to execute all the orders for the public service which they shall receive from their commanding officers.

"3. The commanding officers will consider the midshipmen as a class of officers meriting in a special degree their fostering care; they will see therefore that the schoolmaster performs his duty towards them by diligently and faithfully instructing them in those sciences appertaining to their profession, and that he use his utmost care to render them proficient therein.

"4. Midshipmen are to keep regular journals and deliver them to the commanding officer at the stated periods, in due form.

"5. They are to consider it as the duty to their country to employ a due portion of their time in the study of naval tactics and in acquiring a thorough and extensive knowledge of all the various duties to be performed on board of a ship of war."

In April, 1816, Congress authorized the construction of nine line of battle ships and twelve 44-gun frigates, the superintending of which fell to the navy commissioners. Before considering their work of building ships, a few words of explanation are in order. The vessels of the old navy may be classified as minor craft, sloops of war, frigates, and line of battle ships. To the minor craft belonged galleys, barges, gunboats, and small sailing vessels under 16 guns. The sloops of war were of about 500 tons burden; they mounted from 16 to 22 guns on one deck, and carried from 140 to 175 men. The "Peacock," "Frolic," "Wasp," and "Hornet" of Rodgers's day belonged to this class. The frigates were ship-rigged vessels, of from 800 to 1600 tons

burden; they mounted from 30 to 55 guns on two decks, and carried from 250 to 500 men. The line of battle ships were from 2200 to 3200 tons burden; they mounted from 74 to 120 guns on three decks, and carried from 800 to 1100 men. As their name indicates, they were intended to bear the shock of battle between opposing fleets.

During the Revolution we had only one line of battle ship in our navy, the "America," and she was not completed in time to take part in that conflict. No other was built until the War of 1812, when the "Independence," "Franklin," "Washington," "Chippewa," and "New Orleans" were placed upon the stocks. The two latter were never completed. The "Independence," which went to sea in 1815 as the flag-ship of Commodore William Bainbridge, was the first American line of battle ship to make a cruise. In May, 1816, the "Washington," Commodore Isaac Chauncey, arrived at Annapolis, where she attracted much attention. An American seventy-four was so unusual a sight that she was visited by a party from Washington, consisting of President and Mrs. Madison, Secretary Crowninshield, and Navy Commissioners Rodgers and Porter. In June, she sailed for the Mediterranean, with William Pinkney and family as passengers.

The first line of battle ship built by the commissioners was the "Columbus." Her keel was laid at the Washington navy-yard in May, 1816. The construction of the "Delaware" and "Ohio" was begun in 1817, the "North Carolina" and "Vermont" in 1818, the "Alabama" in 1819, the "New York" in 1820, the "Pennsylvania" in 1821, and the "Virginia" in 1822. Some notion of the size of these ships may be obtained from the dimensions of the "Ohio," which was built at

New York by the noted naval architect, Henry Eckford. Her length was 198 feet, breadth 54.6 feet, and depth 22.5 feet. She was of 2170 tons burden. The length of the mainmast of a line of battle ship as established by the commissioners was 116 feet, foremast 104.3 feet, mizzenmast 92 feet, and bowsprit 75 feet. The "Pennsylvania" was the largest sailing ship of the Old Navy. She carried 120 guns and 1100 men, and had a tonnage of 3241 tons. She was built by Samuel Humphreys, a son of Joshua Humphreys, the designer of the "Constitution." The principal material used in her construction was live oak. President John Quincy Adams, who went aboard her at Philadelphia in 1827, said that she looked like a city in herself and was the largest ship on the ocean.

The commissioners also built many of the famous forty-fours of the old navy—the largest vessels of the frigate class. From 1819 to 1825 the keels of the "Potomac," "Brandywine," "Columbia," "Cumberland," "Savannah," "Raritan," "Sante," and "Sabine" were laid down. The construction of sloops of war under the commissioners was begun in 1825 when Bainbridge was at the head of the navy board and was continued by Rodgers during his second term as president, 1827-1837. These vessels were much used for inshore navigation in foreign waters. The sloops "Vincennes," "Peacock" and "John Adams" were among our first naval ships to circumnavigate the globe. A 20-gun sloop of war cost about \$170,000; a 44-gun frigate, about \$375,000; and a ship of the line about \$500,000. When the navy was in need of small craft, they were usually purchased by the commissioners. In 1822 they bought a mosquito fleet, composed chiefly of 3-gun schooners, for use in suppressing piracy in the West Indies. About 1820,

they began the construction of three steam frigates, on a plan of their own, which varied somewhat from that of the "Demologos," the first steamship in our navy, built in 1814-1815 by Robert Fulton.

Believing that the department could build better ships than private shipbuilders, the commissioners constructed their vessels in the public navy-yards. In 1820 they were employing sixteen hundred men in building ships. Occasionally they visited the yards and inspected the work of the naval constructors. In course of time they established the practice of making an annual visit to all the naval establishments, late in the summer or early in the fall. When it was convenient they attended the launching of a ship, which then as now was a gala occasion. The *National Intelligencer* of March 2, 1819, contains the following description of the launching of the "Columbus" at the Washington navy-yard:

"At a quarter before twelve o'clock yesterday the noble ship of the line 'Columbus' glided from its bed at the navy-yard in this city in the most majestic style in the presence of many thousands of spectators, who, in despite of unfavorable weather, had assembled to witness this interesting scene. The occasion was robbed of much of its brilliance by the state of the weather; but it lost none of its intrinsic grandeur. The vessel was greeted on its descent by a national salute from the artillery, by patriotic airs from the band of the marine corps, and by the shouts of thousands of Columbians gathered together from every quarter of the Union.

"Among the spectators were the President, many senators and representatives in Congress, the heads of departments, the principal officers of government resident here, officers of the army and navy, strangers, and foreigners. It is a very general impression that a more



beautiful launch was never witnessed in any country. This is said to be one of the finest vessels ever built, and to confer credit to the skill and attention of our naval architects. It will not be long before the 'Columbus' bears the national banner on the ocean, under the charge of some one of our most distinguished naval commanders. We are pleased that the name of the rightful discoverer of the shores of this country, and whose name perhaps our country ought distinctively to bear, has been conferred on the first line of battle ship built in the District, the finest vessel ever launched in the United States, and perhaps in the world."

During Rodgers's first term as president of the navy board, the fleet in commission consisted of some twenty vessels—usually a line of battle ship, three or four frigates, and the rest sloops of war or smaller craft. Our navy at this time was chiefly employed in protecting American interests in the Mediterranean and South Pacific, exterminating piracy in the West Indies, suppressing the African slave trade, and surveying the Atlantic coast. In 1819-1821, Captain J. D. Henley, a brother-in-law of Rodgers, made a voyage to Canton, China, in the frigate "Congress," the first American naval vessel to visit a Chinese port. The East India or China squadron was not established until 1835, during Rodgers's second term as president of the navy board.

One of the important duties of the board was the purchasing of naval supplies. Among its records, still preserved in the archives of the navy department at Washington, are eleven large folio volumes containing copies of its contracts from 1815 to 1842. By leafing through a single volume, one may obtain a notion of the kinds of articles purchased by Rodgers and his colleagues—live oak and yellow pine beams, long guns and

carronades, beef and pork, kentledge, juniper shingles, ship chandlery and paints, slop clothing, canvas, patent cordage, anchor iron, masts and spars, stone, coal, gunner's stores, groceries, bread, vegetables, whiskey, and tobacco. The commissioners paid fifty cents a gallon for rye whiskey, which, they stipulated, must be "at least first proof and clear of still burn." The following extract taken from one of the volumes of contracts will illustrate the legal forms that they followed:

"This contract made and entered into the twentieth day of March, *Anno Domini*, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-two, between George Norton of the town of Lexington and state of Kentucky of the one part and John Rodgers, President of and acting for and in behalf of the Board of Navy Commissioners of the United States of the other part, Witnesseth, That the said George Norton doth hereby contract and engage with the said John Rodgers as follows: That for the consideration hereinafter mentioned he will manufacture and deliver on or before the first day of August next at the Navy Yard at the City of Washington and District of Columbia Fifty Kegs of Chewing Tobacco for the use of the Navy of the United States. The said Tobacco, which shall be of the best and most approved quality, shall be manufactured into twists weighing each one pound. And the said kegs shall contain one hundred pounds nett weight each."

One must not suppose that the commissioners in catering to the grosser appetites of the seamen overlooked their spiritual needs. In 1820, they made an estimate of the number of bibles that might be usefully distributed in the navy—thirty bibles for a seventy-four, twenty bibles for a frigate, twelve bibles for a sloop of war, and six for a schooner.

The improvement of the ordnance of the navy by the commissioners was one of their notable achievements. The early naval guns were often defective, and several of them exploded with most disastrous results. During the Revolution a gun on board the frigate "Boston" burst and mortally wounded Lieutenant William Barron. A similar accident on board the "President" during her chase of the "Belvidera" has already been referred to. A little later in the War of 1812, six guns exploded on board Commodore Chauncey's ship, the "General Pike," killing or wounding twenty-two men. In 1815, Commodore Decatur lost forty-nine officers and seamen by the bursting of one of the guns of the "Guerrière." The unfortunate experiences of Commissioners Rodgers and Decatur were not likely to decrease their interest in naval ordnance. Soon after the navy board was organized the commissioners began to consider this subject, and they decided to give all the contracts for naval guns to three cannon factories: the West Point Foundry Association, West Point, New York; the Iron Works of John Mason, Georgetown, District of Columbia; and the Bellona Factory, Richmond, Virginia. They advanced money to each of these firms to enable them to improve their works and to purchase new supplies of metal, and they appointed an ordnance officer to visit the factories and inspect and prove the naval cannon. Master-commandant Stephen Cassin was the first ordnance officer of our navy. In 1822 he was succeeded by Master-commandant Thomas Ap Catesby Jones, who some years later was chosen to command the South Sea exploring expedition. The commissioners established a detailed method of proving guns, which fixed the quantities of gunpowder, shot, and wads to be used. They gave orders that "every gun

must be searched with a searcher; and any gun found to have a defect or to be honeycombed one-tenth of an inch inside or two-tenths of an inch on the exterior is not to be received without being proved four times."

The guns of the navy under the commissioners were either long and heavy or short and light. The former were called "long guns," and the latter carronades. Both kinds varied in size with the weight of ball that they fired. A line of battle ship usually mounted thirty-two long 42-pounders, thirty-four long 32-pounders, and twenty-two 42-pound carronades. The weight of its broadside was about seventeen hundred ten pounds. The long 42-pounders had a long range and great power of penetration, while the 42-pound carronades had a short range and great smashing power. The 44-gun frigates mounted long 24's or 32's, and 42-pound carronades. Long 12's, 18's, and 24's and 18-pound and 24-pound carronades were found on board the sloops of war and the smaller craft.

The secretary of the navy often sought the commissioners' advice in respect to the qualifications of officers, their fitness for promotion, and their assignment to duty. Knowing Rodgers's influence in the department, the officers not infrequently wrote to him to procure for them some favor, perchance a detail to some desirable office or a discharge from an undesirable one. Sometimes, when they were on furlough, they solicited him to procure them duty at sea. Captain John Orde Creighton, tired of idleness on shore, once delicately insinuated his wishes in a friendly letter, as follows: "I have two fine boys, whom I shall ask you to take in your fleet one of these days, for unless you send me to sea soon I shall be too rusty to teach them anything myself." Candidates for a midshipman's berth often

besieged Rodgers to obtain an appointment for them. On one occasion an inmate of a Philadelphia prison, confined for manslaughter, asked the commodore to procure him a pardon, "being desirous of going A Cruising in any Ship or Station your honor Might wish or think proper."

Not until 1819 was the practice of examining midshipmen for promotions instituted. Before this time the secretary of the navy often called upon the commissioners to give their opinion of the fitness of the young gentlemen for lieutenantcies. What they said respecting some of the youngsters who later become famous as admirals is not without interest. As a rule the accuracy of their judgment was verified by future events. Midshipman Joshua R. Sands, who became an efficient rear-admiral, they reported, "aged twenty-one, served with Captain Chauncey, good morals, well educated, and qualified for promotion." Midshipman David G. Farragut was regarded as "highly promising, though not eighteen years of age."

A register of the services and merits of the younger naval officers that was for several years kept by the commissioners contains some interesting information respecting our first admiral. The following report was made in 1815 when Farragut was fourteen years old: "Farragut has been in constant active service from the time he entered the navy, and served some time before in the 'Vesuvius' bomb. He joined the 'Essex' with Captain Porter, and (except while in charge of a prize in the Pacific Ocean) remained in her until she was taken. He was wounded in the action, where he distinguished himself by his bravery, and returned to the United States in the 'Essex Junior'; after which he was for some time attached to the 'Spark' under

Lieutenant-commandant Gamble, joined the 'Independence,' 74, and made a cruise to the Mediterranean. He is a remarkably promising and intelligent youth, a good seaman and navigator for his age, free from vice, and universally beloved." In 1820 his commander, Lieutenant R. H. J. Perry, described him as a correct and promising young officer. In the fall of that year he was examined at New York for promotion by a navy board, which reported him as follows: A good moral character, but deficient in seamanship. Think of it, Farragut deficient in seamanship!

During his first term as president of the board of navy commissioners, Rodgers seldom left the capital unless called away by the duties of his office. In 1822 and 1823, however, certain tasks were assigned him by the secretary of the navy that took him from the city for brief periods. In the former year he served as president of a court of enquiry convened to investigate the conduct of Commodore Isaac Hull as commandant of the Boston navy-yard, who was charged with using some of the articles of the yard and the labor of some of its employees for private purposes. This service was disagreeable to Rodgers, since he and Hull were warm friends. The other members of the court of enquiry were Chauncey and Morris. The court held sessions at the Boston yard from August twelfth until October fifteenth. It decided that, while a few of the acts of the commandant had been indiscrete, they were in general correct and meritorious; and its decision was received by the public as a vindication of a popular and efficient naval officer.

In December, 1822, Commodore Porter resigned from the navy board to take command of a squadron organized to suppress piracy in the West Indies; and

in the following February he sailed from Norfolk for his station. He established his rendezvous at Thompson's Island, or Key West as it is now called. During the summer the yellow fever, in a most malignant form, made its appearance in the squadron, and soon Porter and not a few of his officers and seamen were stricken with it. Early in September, two lieutenants and two midshipmen died of this dreadful disease. As the reports of its progress received by the department were most alarming, the secretary of the navy decided to send an experienced officer and several naval surgeons to Thompson's Island to relieve the sick, take measures for the health of the squadron, and investigate the causes of the disease.

Always indifferent to danger, Rodgers accepted the command of this hazardous and responsible expedition. He left New York on October sixth on the schooner "Shark," accompanied by Doctors Harris, Washington, and Hoffman, of the naval medical corps; and he arrived at the island on the twenty-third, after a rough passage. He at once took command of the station and squadron, since Porter had returned to Hampton Roads. The fever had now abated, although fifty-nine men on the island were still sick with it. These were embarked on board the ships "Hero" and "Harmony" and sent to Norfolk. After giving orders to the vessels remaining on the station respecting their cruising-grounds, the commodore returned to Washington, where he arrived in good health in the latter part of November, to the great relief of his family and friends. The doctors that accompanied him reported that the fever was caused by miasma and the hardships of service in a subtropical climate. Among the latter they enumerated the continuous annoyance of mosquitoes and sandflies.

In October, 1818, on the retirement of Crowninshield from the secretaryship of the navy, President Monroe offered the office to Commodore Rodgers, who, being unwilling to relinquish his captaincy, declined it. Monroe consulted his cabinet on the propriety of the commodore's retaining his naval rank while acting as secretary. But it decided unanimously that the holding of two offices at the same time by one man was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and the disposition of the American people. In December, 1818, the *National Intelligencer* published an article denying that Rodgers had received an offer of the secretaryship. It was sent to the editor of the newspaper by Porter at the instance of Rodgers (so it is said), who was apparently actuated by considerations of modesty and delicacy. The article offended the pure ethics of John Quincy Adams, who comments on it as follows in his diary: "The positive assertion in it that Mr. Monroe did not offer to Rodgers the office of secretary of the navy is not true. Now if any one should say to Porter or Rodgers 'You have published a lie,' they would be bound by the laws of honor to challenge him to a duel. And why is giving the lie to a man of honor so inexpiable an affront? Because it imputes to him that which is infamous. How, then, can Porter or Rodgers justify themselves for passing this deliberate falsehood upon the public?"

By the death of Commodore Alexander Murray on October 6, 1821, Commodore Rodgers became the senior officer of the American navy, a distinction that he retained for seventeen years. If one of the numerous measures to create higher naval ranks that were proposed during the latter part of his life should have passed Congress, Rodgers would have been our first admiral. The opposition to them, however, was too



strong. Not a few of our early statesmen held that the title "admiral" savored of royalty and was not consonant with the spirit of democracy. The commodore was forty-eight years old when he became the ranking naval officer, being at the time, with the exception of Barron, Campbell, and Tingey, the oldest officer in the navy. In 1823 he served for a short time as secretary of the navy *ad interim*.

The first ten years of the navy board constitute the most important period of its existence. By 1825, the impetus imparted to naval affairs by the War of 1812 had largely expended itself, and the appropriations for the increase of the navy had been greatly reduced. Engrossed with the problems and pursuits of peace, Congress had become more or less indifferent to the needs of the navy. That the first naval commissioners performed their duties most efficiently, we have the testimony of Secretary Samuel L. Southard. In 1825, he said that the commissioners had administered the naval material with the greatest economy and in a way deserving of the highest commendation. When Rodgers resigned his commissionership in December, 1824, President Monroe expressed to him the high sense entertained by the Executive of the zeal, intelligence, and skill manifested by him in the discharge of the duties of his office.



### XIII. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON: 1824-1827

**D**URING Rodgers's first term as president of the board of navy commissioners, naval squadrons were established in the Mediterranean, the Pacific, and the West Indies. Of the three squadrons, the Mediterranean was the most important, and service on board its ships was particularly prized by the younger officers, who longed to visit the classic lands of antiquity. For the first few years after the War of 1812, it was commanded by our leading commodores—Decatur, Bainbridge, Chauncey, and Stewart. Soon, however, it was permitted to decline; the number of its ships was decreased and its discipline was relaxed. Early in 1824 the government decided to improve the squadron by adding to it a line of battle ship and a frigate and by placing it under the command of the senior officer of the navy, Commodore Rodgers.

Several considerations led the government to make this decision. In the first place, the Greek Revolution and a war between Algiers and Great Britain were disturbing the peace of the Mediterranean. The Grecian Archipelago was infested with piratical craft who threatened to despoil the American trade with the upper Mediterranean cities, and especially that with Smyrna, Asia Minor, which was now considerable. Under these circumstances, our squadron needed an experienced commander.

Moreover, the state department wished the American commodore in the Mediterranean to undertake a diplo-

matic mission requiring much tact and discretion. At this time we had no treaty with Turkey, and the Greek Revolution made one highly desirable. In the spring of 1824, Mr. George B. English, formerly a lieutenant in the marine corps and now an agent of the secretary of state, returned to Washington from Constantinople, and reported that, owing to the opposition of the European ministers at the Turkish capital, it was not feasible to negotiate a treaty with the Ottoman minister of foreign affairs; and that the minister of marine and grand admiral of the Turkish navy, who was a warm friend of America, had suggested a plan by means of which we might obtain a treaty. The grand admiral proposed that an interview between himself and the commander-in-chief of the American squadron should take place at sea. At this meeting our government might submit to him its proposals, and he would communicate them directly to the Sultan. In this way the negotiations could be conducted secretly, and the treaty could be completed before the European governments learned of it. President Monroe accepted the overtures of the Turkish grand admiral, and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams gave Rodgers directions respecting the points to be covered at the interview. English was chosen secretary and interpreter to the commodore.

There was still another reason for the selection of Rodgers to command the Mediterranean squadron, its need of a rigid disciplinarian. Our young officers on this station had lately injured the good reputation of the navy by their dissipation, their brawls with foreigners, and their duels with each other. The secretary of the navy was convinced that nothing less than the strong hand of Rodgers could correct their habits, repress their ebullitions, and curb their fighting propensities.

Duels between the young gentlemen were of frequent occurrence. After the commodore was chosen to command the squadron and before he reached his station, a midshipman who bore the honored name of Joshua Barney, killed a fellow midshipman in Spain. The seconds were to have fought each other immediately after the meeting of the principals, but the distressing fatality caused some delay; and, before the program could be carried out, the party was arrested by a Spanish guard.

In the summer of 1824, the Mediterranean squadron, then under the command of Captain John Orde Creighton, consisted of the corvette "Cyane," 24, sloops of war "Erie" and "Ontario," 18's, and the schooner "None-such," 12. The two vessels that were to join the squadron were the ships "North Carolina," 74, and "Constitution," 44. Rodgers preferred the "Columbus," which was built at Washington under the immediate supervision of the commissioners, to the "North Carolina"; but the cabinet decided upon the latter ship, since she had never been in the Mediterranean and it was thought advisable to display a variety of force in those waters. The command of the "Constitution" was given to Captain Thomas Macdonough. She sailed in October, 1824, and the "North Carolina" was to follow her in the ensuing winter.

The commodore retained his commissionership at the navy board during the summer and fall of 1824 while his flag-ship was being fitted for sea at Norfolk. For several months he divided his attention between his two offices. The "North Carolina" was the first and only seventy-four commanded by Rodgers. She was pierced for one hundred two guns, but she actually mounted ninety-four guns—long and short 32's and 42's. Her extreme height, measured from the top of the mainmast

to the bottom of the keel, was two hundred eighty feet; and her extreme length, measured from the flyingjib-boom to the ringtail-boom, was three hundred eighty feet. Her complement was nine hundred sixty men. Besides the commodore, she carried a captain of the fleet, a captain of the ship, ten lieutenants, thirty-four midshipmen, and a full quota of staff officers. Rodgers chose Captain Daniel T. Patterson as captain of the fleet; Master-commandant C. W. Morgan, as captain of the ship; and Lieutenant M. C. Perry, as senior lieutenant. His surgeon was Doctor Bailey Washington, a distant relative of the general; and his chaplain was the Reverend John W. Grier. There were also on board a captain of marines, a schoolmaster, and a commodore's secretary. Several midshipmen of the "North Carolina"—Dupont, Selfridge, and S. P. Lee—later became noted naval officers. One of the young gentlemen was Frederick Rodgers, the commodore's son. On December 15, Rodgers resigned the presidency of the navy board, and three days later he took formal command of his vessel at Norfolk. As he came aboard her, the yards were manned, a salute was fired, and his broad pennant was hoisted.

Before he sailed, he was honored by public dinners both at Washington and at Norfolk. The dinner at the capital was given at Gadsby's hotel, a famous hostelry in its day. It was attended by many of the chief officials of the navy, the army, and the civil service. Among others present were Secretaries Adams, Calhoun, and Southard, Attorney-general Wirt, and Postmaster-general McLean; Generals Mason, Jones, and Jesup; and Commodores Chauncey, Morris, and Wadsworth. The marine band furnished the music. The toasts, which were numerous, were largely adulatory of Rodgers and

the navy. Commodore Chauncey proposed "The memory of Commodore Truxtun; the officer under whose auspices our gallant guest first distinguished himself as a naval officer." The sentiment of Attorney-general Wirt contained a reference to the figurehead of Rodgers's flag-ship, which was a bust of Sir Walter Raleigh: "The 'North Carolina'; genius at her prow and energy on her deck, her country asks no nobler representatives on the ocean." The virtues of live oak as a material of naval construction afforded inspiration to the secretary of state, John Quincy Adams: "The great plant of the American forest; afloat upon the mountain wave, wafting to every clime the atmosphere of Freedom in which it grew." The toast that aroused most applause was "Our worthy and respected guest, Commodore Rodgers; as distinguished in his public character as he is estimable in his private life." The commodore responded with a neat address and a toast to the capital city.

In January, 1825, Rodgers sailed up the Chesapeake on a practice cruise. Leaving his vessel at Ragged Point, not far from the mouth of the Potomac, he came to the seat of government to take leave of his family and the department. He returned to his ship on the steamboat "Washington," accompanied by a party of visitors, which included President Monroe, Secretary Southard, Senator Kelly of Alabama, and several congressmen and naval officers. The visitors spent Sunday on board the "North Carolina." They inspected her from top to bottom, and were especially pleased with her neatness and order and with her library containing eleven hundred volumes, which had been purchased from voluntary contributions made by her officers and seamen. After they had attended the religious services of the day

and had partaken of a sumptuous dinner, they returned to the capital.

The commodore next proceeded to Hampton Roads, where he was employed several weeks in provisioning and repairing his ship. Finally, on March 27, 1825, having received orders from both the secretary of the navy and the secretary of state respecting his duties in the Mediterranean, he put to sea. He arrived at Gibraltar after a boisterous passage of thirty-three days. He had been anxiously expected at that port for some time. Among those who awaited his coming was Lieutenant Alexander Slidell Mackenzie of our navy, who was on furlough and had been traveling in Spain. This officer was a writer of no little charm and distinction, and he has left us a lively description of the arrival of the "North Carolina" at Gibraltar. His pen picture of a characteristic scene in the Old Navy may be quoted:

"After much weary expectation, the ship was at length signaled from the tower, and, climbing to the top of the Rock, I saw her coming down before a gentle levanter, with skysails and studdingsails—a perfect cloud of snow-white canvas. By and by the lighter sails were drawn in and disposed of. Europa was doubled and left behind, and the gallant ship stood boldly into the harbor, with yards a little braced, sails all filled and asleep, and hull just careening enough to improve the beauty of the broadside. As she came closer and I contemplated her from the more favorable position of the line wall, nothing could exceed the beauty of the spectacle."

Not long after the arrival of the "North Carolina," Rodgers went ashore to pay his respects to the local authorities. His departure from his ship has been finely described by Mackenzie:



"The sailors were drawn up before the mainmast, looking with respect towards the hallowed region of the quarter-deck. Upon this spacious parade-ground flanked by a double battery, a company of fine-looking soldiers, with burnished and well-brushed attire, were drawn up to salute the departure of the commander. A splendid band of music, dressed in Moorish garb, was stationed at the stern, and the officers were all collected for the same purpose upon the quarter-deck, in irregular groups of noble-looking young fellows, the present pride and future hope of our country. At length the Herculean form and martial figure of the veteran commodore was added to the number. Here was the master-spirit that gave impulse and soul to the machine; a thousand eyes were fixed upon him, a thousand hats were raised; and as he passed over the side, the soldiers presented arms, and the music sent forth a martial melody. I thought I had never seen any array so soul-inspiring, so imposing."<sup>34</sup>

Rodgers's squadron consisted of the following ships: "North Carolina," Master-commandant C. W. Morgan; "Constitution," Captain Thomas Macdonough; "Cyane," Captain J. O. Creighton; "Erie," Master-commandant David Deacon; and "Ontario," Master-commandant J. B. Nicholson. In July the "Cyane" returned to the United States by the way of Cape Mesurado and the West Indies. Rodgers was greatly disappointed at not finding the fleet at Gibraltar, and he was inclined to blame Macdonough for a dereliction of duty, as may be seen from one of his letters to the secretary of the navy: "If Captain Macdonough was officially apprised, as I presume he was previous to his departure from the United States, that I was to com-

<sup>34</sup> Mackenzie, A. S. *A Year in Spain*, fifth edition, vol. ii, 263-265.

mand in the Mediterranean, I shall feel it my duty to remove him from the command of the 'Constitution,' for not meeting me here or apprising me where I might find him. I set out with the determination of adhering myself most rigidly to every law, regulation, and principle of the service, and I shall undoubtedly exact a compliance with the same from every inferior, in the full expectation of receiving the support as well as the approbation of the government. In the exercise of this duty, however, I hope never to forget what is due to others." On learning that Macdonough had not been ordered by the department to govern his movements with respect to those of the "North Carolina," the commodore ceased to blame him for his absence from Gibraltar. After the misunderstanding had been explained, the two officers were on the best of terms.

The fleet was at Messina when Rodgers arrived on his station, and it did not join him at Gibraltar until the middle of June. While he was awaiting its coming, he provisioned the flag-ship for a five months' cruise, and showed her at Malaga, Algeciras, and Tangier, where she was much visited and admired. Although our relations with all the Barbary powers were most friendly during Rodgers's stay in the Mediterranean, he nevertheless, in accordance with custom, communicated regularly with our consuls to those states and frequently exhibited his vessels at the principal Barbary capitals. The affairs at the head of the Mediterranean and the mission entrusted to him by the secretary of state, however, chiefly occupied his attention.

On July ninth, Rodgers sailed from Gibraltar with his fleet for the Levant, touching on his way at Tunis and thence proceeding directly to the Archipelago. One month later he stopped at the classic island of

Paros, where he remained several days to water his ship and to give his officers an opportunity of "examining the relics of antiquity." This island had taken the side of the Greeks in their struggle with Turkey. Its governor exchanged friendly letters with the commodore, but was prevented by illness from visiting him.

An interesting incident occurred at Paros while the "North Carolina" was anchored there. Two Greeks brought to the vessel eight Turkish women (six black and two white) and offered to sell them to Rodgers for forty dollars a piece. The women had been captured by the revolutionists on the surrender of Corinth early in the war; and, after undergoing various vicissitudes, had been transported from Spezzia to Paros to be sold as slaves. The blacks had been the slaves of some Turkish women at Corinth, but one of the whites appeared to be a lady of quality. The commodore, after reproving the Greeks for violating the laws of war, offered them fifty dollars for the lot; but they refused to take that sum. Then they made off with their captives with the intention of trying their luck with a British captain whose vessel was anchored not far from the "North Carolina." Moved with compassion for the unfortunate women, Rodgers decided to procure their release in case the British captain failed to do so. He ordered two of his boats to be launched and directed the officer in command to bring the women to the "North Carolina" if the English captain did not buy them. As the Greeks approached the British vessel, one of their countrymen acting as a pilot on board her insultingly and peremptorily forbade them to come near. Frightened by his angry words, they made off with great haste, followed by Rodgers's boats, which after a long chase overhauled them and returned with them

to the "North Carolina." The commodore now told the Greeks that he had decided to hold them as prisoners on board his ship while he communicated with their government and ascertained what right they had to enslave the women. This had the desired effect. They gladly accepted fifty dollars, and parted with their captives. The women were taken to Smyrna, and, after they had been decently clothed, were liberated. They asked to be transported to America, since their degradation by the Greeks would forever prevent them from resuming their former status in Turkey, but the commodore was unable to grant their request.

The squadron arrived at Smyrna on July twentieth, where it was cordially welcomed by both officials and private citizens, notwithstanding the abuse heaped on the Sultan in America, with which the Smyrniots seemed to be well acquainted. Many of the residents visited the fleet, curious to see the ships of the new world, which at this time were a rare sight in the Levant. Among the visitors, Rodgers said, were some Turkish women, who, attended by eunuchs, and, with faces heavily veiled, looked at everything and everybody but spoke to no one. The commodore went ashore and called on the local pasha and on the American consul, David W. Offley, at whose house he received visits from the European consuls. Soon after his arrival in port his officers and seamen assisted in putting out a fire which threatened to do great damage to the city. The foreign merchants were exceedingly grateful for the timely aid rendered by the Americans, and they wrote a letter thanking the commodore for the unselfish efforts of his men.

The principal object of Rodgers's visit to Smyrna was to ascertain the whereabouts of the Turkish minister of

marine or grand admiral. On May first, he had written to Offley from Gibraltar enclosing letters for the grand admiral. These related to the proposed negotiations authorized by the secretary of state. Unfortunately Offley was not able to deliver them, nor did he know where the admiral, who was at sea with his fleet, might be found. With a view to obtaining reliable news of the Turkish fleet, Rodgers, after a brief stay at Smyrna, sailed for Napoli de Romania, the capital of the Greeks, situated at the head of the Gulf of Argos on the eastern coast of the Morea.

Some months before the arrival of the "North Carolina" in the Mediterranean the viceroy of Egypt decided to aid the sultan in suppressing the rebellion in Greece. In February, 1825, an Egyptian army, under Ibrahim Pasha, landed on the southern coast of the Morea. Within a few months it conquered almost the whole peninsula, including Navarin, the chief seaport, and Tripolitza, an interior city and the capital of the new Grecian Republic. Driven from Tripolitza, the revolutionary government established itself at Napoli de Romania. Here on September twelfth, the commodore arrived with his fleet, four days out of Smyrna; and here he remained until the eighteenth. He was received most courteously by the leading officials of the Republic. The day after his arrival His Excellency George Conduriotti, president of the executive; Theodoretus Vrestenes, vice-president of the senate; Prince Alexander Mavrocordato, secretary of state; the secretaries of war; and several other members of the government breakfasted on board the "North Carolina." On the succeeding day the chief officers of the squadron were entertained on shore by the officials of the government.

In describing his visit to Napoli de Romania to the secretary of the navy, the commodore said that the Greek cause was in a bad way, notwithstanding that their capital was as impregnable as Gibraltar. "The possession of a single place like this," he added, "might still afford their friends some hope that by unanimity and perseverance they might possibly succeed in establishing their independence. To those however who are best acquainted with their character, no such opinion is now entertained. For in addition to their lack of funds, jealousy and a want of confidence in each other seem to pervade all classes of society. Ibrahim Pasha, son of the viceroy of Egypt, may be said to be already in possession of the Morea. For although Napoli de Romania cannot be taken by any force so long as it retains the means of subsistence for five hundred men, still he is in possession of Navarin and Tripolitza and marches when and where he pleases almost without opposition—the Greeks retiring to the mountains as he advances. Indeed such has been their fears of late and such their distresses, that at the time I left N. de Romania on the 18th instant, several thousands of miserable fugitives—men, women, and children—had sought refuge under the walls of that place, notwithstanding they were refused admission into the city from an apprehension, it was said, that the plague or some other pestilential disorder might be produced."

The Grecian government was unable to give Rodgers any information respecting the recent movements of the Ottoman fleet. He therefore decided to postpone his interview with the grand admiral until the following year. Fearing that the half-starved Greeks would despoil our merchantmen, he stationed the "Ontario" in the Archipelago. With the rest of the fleet he re-

turned to Gibraltar, making a call only at Algiers on his way.

Soon after reaching Gibraltar, the commodore relieved Macdonough, at his request, from the command of the "Constitution" and gave his ship to Captain Patterson. The hero of Lake Champlain was now dying of consumption. The distress produced by this dreadful disease was aggravated by the recent death of his wife. Rodgers would have gladly sent him home on board the sloop "Erie," could she have been spared. As it was, he rented the cabin of the brig "Edwin" (being compelled to pay for it an exorbitant price), permitted the son and physician of the sick officer to accompany him, and in other ways provided for his care and comfort. The "Edwin" sailed from Gibraltar on October twenty-second. About three weeks later when she was off the capes of the Delaware, Macdonough died—within sight of his native land, to whose glory his genius had so eminently contributed.

Early in November the frigate "Brandywine," 44, joined Rodgers at Gibraltar. She had conveyed Lafayette from America to France, and had landed him, together with Commodore Charles Morris, her commander, and Captain G. C. Read at Havre. Toward the end of November, Rodgers arrived at Port Mahon on the island of Minorca with his fleet, where he established his winter quarters; having obtained permission through our minister at Madrid to land naval stores at that port free of duty. In February, the schooner "Porpoise," Lieutenant Benjamin Cooper, joined the squadron, bringing orders from Washington for the return of the "Brandywine." In the spring of 1826, after visiting Gibraltar, Rodgers sailed for Smyrna with the four ships "North Carolina," "Constitution," "Ontario,"

and "Porpoise." The "Erie," having taken the place of the Ontario," was already in the Archipelago. The fleet on its way eastward touched at Algiers, Tunis, Milos, and Paros. It arrived at Vourla, twenty miles from Smyrna, on the nineteenth of June.

The commodore's movements during the previous year had caused much speculation as to their object. At Paris some of the wiseheads declared that the United States was trying to obtain an island in the Archipelago; and at Tunis it was rumored that the Greeks had ceded us the island of Paros, in return for promised aid in their struggle with Turkey. Rodgers's real purpose seems not to have been suspected. The second day after his arrival at Vourla he went to Smyrna to confer with Offley respecting the whereabouts of the grand admiral and his fleet. On learning that they were still in the Hellespont, he decided to sail to the Dardanelles and proceed thence by land to the grand admiral's headquarters. He was joined by Offley before he left Vourla. His movements from June thirtieth to July seventeenth may be best followed in his letter to the secretary of the navy, dated ship "North Carolina," harbor of Vourla, July 18, 1826.

This letter should be preceded by a brief account of the grand admiral. His name was Khosrew, but he is usually called by his title, Capudan Pacha or Captain Pasha. Owing to a physical defect, he is often referred to as the lame pasha. He held the offices of commander-in-chief of the Turkish fleet, minister of marine, and inspector of the seas. Of the Ottoman officials, he was the third in rank. A courteous and tactful man, he possessed considerable ability as a diplomat; but as a sailor he was unskilled and cowardly.

The commodore's letter read as follows:



“ Since I wrote you last from this place on the 28th June, I have had the gratification to shew the squadron, and display the flag of the United States at the entrance of the Dardanelles.

“ On the 30th ultimo I left here with this ship, the ‘ Constitution,’ ‘ Ontario,’ and ‘ Porpoise’ for the Island of Tenedos, at which place we anchored on the 2d instant. Soon after anchoring, the Governor of the Island paid me a visit and informed me that the Capudan Pacha, with his whole fleet, then lay at the Dardanelles. I informed him that I was desirous of seeing the Turkish fleet and of communicating with the Capudan Pacha, and therefore wished to know when the fleet would be out. He replied that the fleet would sail in ten or twelve days, but advised if I wished to communicate with the Pacha that I had better go to the Hellespont by land, a distance of about 20 miles, and that if I decided to do so he would inform the Pacha of my intention, and provide the means of conducting me to him. To this I assented, and you will be surprised when I tell you that he now asked me what country our flag represented. I told him that it was the flag of the United States of America and that a vessel of war of our country had been in that quarter a great many years before. He said that neither himself nor any other person then on the island had ever seen such a flag before. This man was very civil and requested that I would command his services in any way I might find them useful; that he would furnish Guides if the Officers of the Squadron wished to visit the plains of Troy, (which form one side of the Straits in which the Squadron then lay), and the reputed tombs of Ajax, Achilles, and other interesting relics in sight. I accepted his offer and a guide was accordingly sent the next day, when the Offi-

cers commenced, and were allowed by turns as their duties would permit, to explore the Country from the entrance of the Dardanelles to Eski Stamboul (ancient Constantinople).

“On the 4th instant a Division of the Turkish fleet, consisting of two Ships of the Line, four frigates and seventeen corvettes and Brigs, amounting in all to twenty-three sail, made its appearance, coming out of the Dardanelles. At the time the fleet passed it was blowing quite a fresh gale, which added much to the novelty of its appearance, and one of the frigates running upon a rock in the passage between Tenedos and the plains of Troy, and knocking off her rudder, occasioning its detention for some time, which afforded an opportunity of communicating with its commanding officer the more readily, and this I did, while it was lying to, to ascertain the damage done to the frigate, by despatching Master-commandant Perry in the schooner ‘Porpoise,’ accompanied by Mr. English, my deputed interpreter, to the flag-ship, then about 8 or 9 miles to leeward. At 10 p.m. Capt. Perry returned and informed me that the vessels which had passed was a division of the Turkish fleet bound to Candia under the command of the Capt. Bey, the next officer in rank to the Capudan Pacha, to form a junction with the Egyptian fleet. That the Capt. Bey had received him in a very courteous manner, according to the Turkish style, and that previous to the taking leave, he informed him the Capudan Pacha was at the Hellespont, where he knew he would be glad to see me. That he was then equipping another and larger division of the fleet for sea, and would probably sail in ten or twelve days from that time.

“I now made arrangements to proceed by land to visit the Capudan Pacha at the Hellespont, but the damage

sustained by the before mentioned frigate bringing him down to Tenedos to ascertain the amount of damage done to her, and to give directions for her repairs, happened very opportunely for me, as it was the means of saving me a jaunt by land I had no desire to undertake if it could be avoided.

“On the 5th instant the Captain Pacha, accompanied by his Flag Lieutenant and Confidential Dragoman, arrived at Tenedos under the escort of his bodyguard, and immediately on arriving sent the Lieutenant accompanied by the Dragoman to apprize me of it, to present his compliments, to inform me how happy he felt to see the American squadron there, and that he would be glad to see me on shore the next day at such hour as might best suit my convenience. After the delivery of this message I expressed to the Lieutenant through the Dragoman my regret that the frigate should have met with such a serious accident, to which he replied that he did also, for that the Capudan Pacha felt very much incensed at the Captain; that he would no doubt cut off his head, unless on my meeting the Pacha the next day I should intercede for him; that he was sure the Pacha would desist from putting him to death, if I would request it. I informed him that I should make the request, if by doing so I could save the life of a fellow creature; that the Pacha’s compliance with such a request I should consider not only as a singular favor conferred on myself, but as one of the highest compliments he could pay my country.

“The Lieutenant and Dragoman now, notwithstanding it was dark, expressed a desire to see the ship below, observing that, from the impressions made upon their minds from seeing the upper deck as they came into my cabin, they could not go on shore satisfied without hav-

ing it in their power to tell the Pacha what kind of a ship she was below. Accordingly, the decks and store rooms were lighted up, and after being shown all over her, they expressed how much they had been delighted; that they had seen some of the best ships of England, France and other nations, but that they had seen none that would bear any comparison to her, and that the Capudan Pacha on seeing her would think so too. They now took leave after receiving my reply to the Capudan Pacha's message, that I would do myself the honor of waiting on him the next morning at 10 o'clock.

"On the 6th instant, at 10 a.m. I left the ship on my promised visit to the Capudan Pacha, accompanied by Mr. Offley, our Consul for Smyrna, and Mr. George B. English, my deputed Interpreter. At the time of landing, the Capudan Pacha was not at his quarters, but soon presented himself. On his first entering the room, I was not more struck at the contrast between his brawny, grotesque figure, huge grey beard and the richness of his dress, than I was by his polished manners and polite, genteel address. In the course of my interview with him, which lasted about an hour and a half, he asked a great many questions about our country, its extent and productions, and in a facetious manner mentioned how much we had been misrepresented by other nations, and alluded particularly to some of the British agents and Navy officers, who had been in Constantinople and in the Archipelago, as not being our friends. He said he now knew us better and would know how to represent us to his sovereign, the Sultan, on his return to Constantinople.

"After some further conversation, principally relating to our Navy and the size and construction of our ships, their equipment, &c., &c., the loss of the rudder

of the frigate which had occasioned his coming to Tenedos was introduced, and at my request Mr. Offley took this opportunity of mentioning to him how much we felt interested for her unfortunate Commander; that we hoped his conduct had not been so flagrant as to require his being punished with death. To this the Pacha replied that his conduct had been such as to deserve the severest punishment, but that he would remit the punishing him with death, (or words to that effect) provided I would give him a good beating; that his conduct had been so extremely reprehensible as to render some punishment necessary, and that if I would not have him beaten, he must; seeing that I was at a loss what reply to make to this speech, he laughed and observed that as I requested it his life should be spared. The second day after this interview the frigate sailed, commanded by the same Captain; but whether he received the promised beating or bastinado, I have never been informed. Capt. Perry was present when the sailing orders of the Captain of the frigate were given by the Pacha to one of his officers to deliver. In handing the orders to the officer he said, 'Now, deliver this and tell him to go to Mytilene or to hell and wait my arrival.' Immediately on the delivery of the order the frigate accordingly got underway.

"On the 8th instant, the object of the Pacha's visit being now accomplished, I sent in return for the civilities he had shewn me, the 'Porpoise' to convey him across the Strait between Tenedos and the Main. On reaching the 'Porpoise' he was received by Capt. Perry, whom I had sent to accompany him, and the 'Porpoise' immediately got underway, taking his magnificent barge, which had brought him from the Dardanelles, in tow, and at 6 p.m., having proceeded as near the place of

landing as the depth of water would permit, he took leave of Capt. Perry and Lieut. Commdt. Cooper, and getting into his barge, was saluted by the schooner with 21 guns. Thus ended our first interview with the Captain Pacha, who in the course of crossing the Strait frequently expressed to Capt. Perry and Lieut. Commdt. Cooper the great delight his meeting us had afforded him.

"On the 9th instant, having afforded the officers of the squadron an opportunity of visiting the few remaining relicks to be met with on the Plains of Troy and adjacent Country, the squadron got underway and beat up against a head wind and strong current to the entrance of the Dardanelles, so near as to afford a minute view of the batteries on each side of its entrance. Here, as I have since understood, some alarm was occasioned on the display of our colours, that caused the guns of all the Batteries to be manned and an express to be sent off to the Capudan Pacha at the Hellespont, for it seems they did not know what nation our flag represented. The Capudan Pacha, to whom I had communicated at our interview my intention of looking into the Dardanelles with the squadron before I went to Mytilene, laughed very heartily I was told at the account delivered by the express of the large ships and strange flag which he said were then to be seen at the Dardanelles.

"At 5 p.m., after all on board the squadron had been gratified with a sight of this singular strait that communicates with the Black Sea, the signal was made and we bore away for Mytilene. The atmosphere at this time was singularly serene, and an hour after bearing up, the prospect from our decks was peculiarly sublime and interesting, for just before sunset the following objects of interest, which have been the themes of so much history, poetry and song, presented themselves

to view. The entrance of the Dardanelles, the entrance of the River Scamander, the islands of Tenedos, Imbros, Samothrace and Lemnos, Mount Ida, Mount Athos, Mount Olympus, the tombs of Ajax and Achilles, and Cape Baba were distinctly to be seen from our decks. On the 11th instant we anchored before the town of Mytilene in the Island of the same name, so celebrated in ancient history for its fertility and productions, and is still ranked among the richest and most productive of the islands of the Archipelago. Here we were received with the same civility and respect which we experienced on first visiting every other Turkish town. On the 12th, the day after our arrival, I went on shore with the Captains of the vessels of the squadron, accompanied by Mr. Offley, our Consul, to wait upon the Governor, but did not find him at home. We were now conducted to the Pavilion of the Capudan Pacha, situated on a very pretty spot that overlooks the Naval Arsenal, where, after spending an hour, we returned on board.

“On the 13th instant I received a visit from the Governor of the island, a venerable, richly dressed Turk of about seventy years of age, six feet 2 or 3 inches high, and a huge grey beard of at least a foot long, which rested in great majesty upon his breast. After being shown over the ship, which, owing to his curiosity and the number of questions he asked, it took full two hours to do, he expressed his admiration and surprise at what he had seen, his thanks for the attentions that had been shewn him, and then left the ship. The Turks, with but very few exceptions, are extremely ignorant of everything relating to Geography, Astronomy, and the nature of the planetary system, and I cannot omit mentioning an incident that took place before the

Governor left the ship, to shew his ignorance on these subjects. He enquired how far it was to America, and what was its direction from Constantinople. He was told that the distance was about 5,000 miles, and to explain its relative position the more clearly, a terrestrial globe was placed on the table for this purpose. Mr. Offley, who acted as Interpreter on this occasion, first turning the globe in such a position as to have Constantinople uppermost on its surface, said to the Governor: 'Here is Constantinople;' and then stopping and putting his finger on Washington, without altering its position, said: 'Here is the Capital of America.' This explanation appearing to please the Governor, he observed with an air of exultation: 'So I see that Constantinople is the uppermost;' to which Mr. Offley replied, 'Yes, sometimes;' and then turning that part up on which the United States are situated, the Governor, without asking any further questions, shook his head and burst into a loud laugh. On the Governor's leaving the ship, a salute of eleven guns was fired, which was immediately returned by the batteries with the same number.

"On the 14th instant the Capudan Pacha's fleet, consisting of two ships of the Line, 7 frigates, 7 corvettes, and 16 brigs and schooners, made its appearance. The ship bearing the flag of the Pacha anchored first, but soon weighed, and after keeping underway an hour or more, anchored again further inshore. After this the rest of the fleet, without observing any particular order, except that the smallest vessels took berths nearest the shore, anchored in succession as they came in. Previous to the anchoring of the ship bearing the flag of the Capdn. Pacha, I sent Capt. Perry to present my compliments and apprise him of my intention to salute him.



To which message he returned his compliments and at the same time requested that the salute might not be fired until after he had anchored. At 8 a.m. the Capudan Pacha's ship having anchored, a salute of 21 guns was fired from this ship, which was immediately returned by his with the same number. The morning following, the Capudan Pacha's Confidential Dragoman came on board the 'N. Carolina,' and presented the compliments of the Grand Admiral of three tails, and requested to know when it would be agreeable to me to receive the visit of the Admiral in return for that which I had made him at Tenedos.

"Three o'clock next day being fixed on, the Capudan Pacha came on board the 'N. Carolina' about that hour in a splendid barge rowing twenty oars, when he was received with the attention due to the rank of the third personage of the Ottoman Empire. During his stay he was conducted over every part of the ship, which he scrutinized with great attention and evident admiration. After remaining on board upwards of two hours, which he professed to have passed with much pleasure and satisfaction, he took leave with many expressions of friendship and respect for the American nation. On his leaving the ship everything was done to render the compliments shewn him novel and imposing, not only to him but to his whole fleet, and accordingly the yards were manned, the men dressed in white, and a salute of 21 guns fired, which was immediately returned by the Capudan Pacha's flag-ship.

"On the following day (the 16th instant) accompanied by the Captains and several other officers of the squadron, I returned his visit and was treated with great cordiality and distinction. On leaving the ship of the Turkish Grand Admiral, his flag, then flying at

the Main, was struck, and another, bearing the seal of the Sultan, which was never before hoisted except on the occasion of the Sultan's going himself on board the Turkish fleet, was hoisted in its place, and a salute of 21 guns fired. This extraordinary honor the Pacha took care the next day to let me know had never been conferred on the flag of any European Nation, and that he hoped I would look upon it as an indubitable proof of his great respect and friendship for the American Nation.

"Some hours after my return from the Pacha's ship, he sent his Confidential Dragoman to the 'N. Carolina,' with directions to express his satisfaction at what had passed, and to present to myself and the Captains of the several vessels of the squadron then with me, as tokens of the pleasure and satisfaction he had experienced by meeting the squadron under my command, myself with a pipe, a shawl and some few articles of Turkish female dress, and Captains Patterson and Perry and Lieut. Cooper, the first two with a shawl and a few articles of female dress similar to those presented to me, and Lieut. Cooper with a shawl. These presents were forced upon me, and the other officers just mentioned, in a way not to be rejected without running the risk of giving offence, and if their acceptance is thought in any respect incompatible with the Station I hold, I will, on my return, send such as were presented to me to the Dept. of State, to be disposed of as the Secretary may think proper. The other officers, in such an event, will do the same. They are mere baubles, of no intrinsic value to those who possess them, further than as mementos of the time, circumstances and interchange of civilities which took place on the first meeting of an American Squadron with the Grand Fleet of the Otto-

man Empire, commanded by an officer who altho' he is the 3rd personage of the Empire in point of rank is neither a prince nor a potentate. To insure a reception of the articles sent me thro' the Dragoman, he took care on presenting them to let me know that the Capudan Pacha had instructed him to say that he would be glad to receive in return some articles of American Manufacture, so that I fear instead of being a gainer I may be a loser by my acceptance of this token of the Pacha's personal good will.

"This afternoon the squadron got underway, and after making a tack to windward, each ship bore up in succession and ran down through the Turkish Fleet, and on coming abreast of the Flag of the Capudan Pacha, manned her rigging, the crew dressed in white, and gave him three cheers, the Band at the same time playing 'Hail Columbia.'

"The exhibition of the squadron on this occasion must have been very imposing, inasmuch as the several evolutions of getting underway, of making sail, of tacking, of bearing up, of manning the rigging, and of putting the ship under a crowd of sail in a moment as it were after cheering, were performed each with a celerity and precision such as I have never before witnessed, and will, without doubt, leave a lasting impression on the mind not only of the Capudan Pacha, but on that of every other Turk who happened to witness the scene. Every mark of respect I thought it necessary to tender the Capudan Pacha for his polite attentions to me, and the uniform protection which he is known to have afforded to our commerce in these seas for several years past, being now rendered, I shaped my course for this place, where I arrived the next morning at 8 o'clock."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Rodgers Papers, "Letter Book of the 'North Carolina,'" July 18, 1826.

The official documents of the state department relating to Rodgers's interview with the grand admiral have not been published, nor are they accessible to historical students, being still regarded by the department as confidential. Without them, it is impossible to present a complete account of the commodore's diplomatic mission. The work that he began was continued by his successor in command of the Mediterranean squadron, Commodore W. M. Crane; and in 1830, the year that the Greeks obtained their independence, Commodore James Biddle (the successor of Crane), Consul David W. Offley, and Mr. Charles Rhind negotiated a treaty with Turkey.

Rodgers's gifts from the Capudan Pacha did indeed cost him dearly. He sent the pacha for his own use a diamond ring and a snuff-box set with diamonds, and for his dragoman a fine sword. The total value of these presents was not far from two thousand dollars. The pacha asked for a thousand stands of arms for his government, and a musket, bayonet, belt, and cartouch box for his own use. The latter articles the commodore gave him; but not the arms, as he did not care to aid in equipping the sultan's military forces.

In August, 1826, Rodgers, after stationing the "Ontario" in the Archipelago and ordering the "Erie" to visit Tripoli and Algiers, sailed with the rest of the fleet for Port Mahon, where he arrived on September tenth. He now ordered the "Erie" to return home, as the term of enlistment of her crew was about to expire. During the fall of 1826 and the succeeding winter the "Ontario" rendered valuable service by protecting our commerce in the Archipelago. Two of our merchantmen, however, the brigs "Susan" of Boston and "Falcon" of New York, were stopped by the Greeks and

robbed of some of their valuables. In the winter of 1826-1827 the "Porpoise" was employed as a dispatch boat, the "Constitution" was refitted at Port Mahon, and the "North Carolina" made a perilous voyage in the southern Mediterranean.

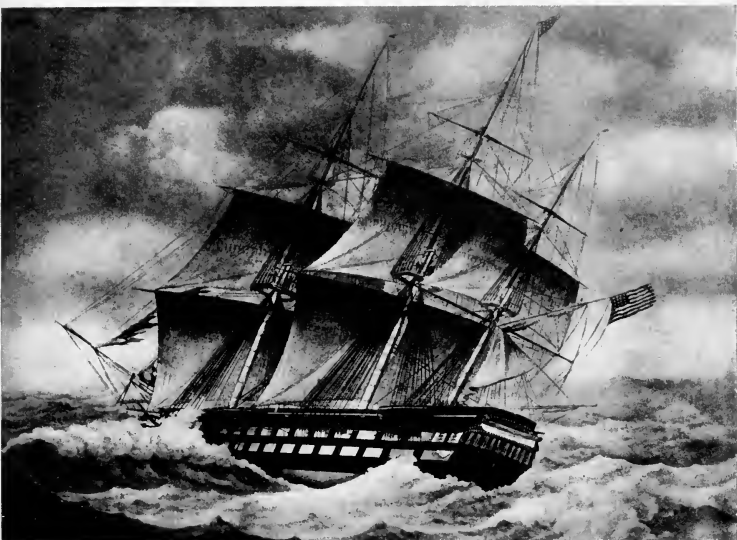
Early in December the commodore went to Toulon in the flag-ship, and inspected the dock yards at that port. He next visited Marseilles, where he was cordially entertained by the British admiral, Sir Alexander Cochrane, who had been his foe at Baltimore in the War of 1812. On his return to Toulon, Doctor S. P. Heap and family took passage on board the "North Carolina" for Tunis, to which state Heap had been appointed consul. From Tunis, Rodgers sailed for Port Mahon. He had no sooner left the African coast than he encountered a violent northwest gale, with which he contended the larger part of a month. For several days, such was the force of the wind, his ship was able to carry only close-reefed maintopsails and storm staysails; and to keep these in repair from fifteen to eighteen sailmakers were busy night and day. Owing to exposure and privations, many of his officers and seamen fell ill of catarrhal complaints, and worst of all the smallpox made its appearance. Finally, on exhausting his provisions, he bore up and ran into Malta, where he arrived on January 20, 1827. The sick were at once conveyed to a hospital on shore, and the ship was thoroughly disinfected. By February seventeenth, when the "North Carolina" left Malta, the patients were nearly all well; and on March third, the commodore reported from Port Mahon that the smallpox had disappeared entirely and that the health of his vessel was never better.

The log of the "North Carolina" for the years 1826-

1827 throws much light on the employments of the officers and crew on board a line of battle ship in the Old Navy. It contains frequent references to the exercising at great guns, the reefing and furling of sails, the making of signals, and the cleaning and repairing of the ship. The holystone and paint pot were in daily use, and the armorers, carpenters, and other artisans kept up an almost continual din. Occasionally courts martial were held, salutes fired, visits of ceremony made or received, and orders for placing the ship in mourning issued. In November, 1826, funeral honors were paid to Ex-presidents Jefferson and Adams by hoisting the flag at half-mast, firing minute guns, cockbilling the yards, wearing crape, and painting black various parts of the ship.

During his two years' stay in the Mediterranean, Rodgers greatly improved the discipline and moral tone of the squadron. He issued rigorous orders to his officers forbidding dueling, the defaming of superiors, the communicating of articles to the public prints, and the wearing of civilian dress on shore. He forbade the midshipmen to lend money to each other or to become indebted to foreign tradesmen, and he restricted their visits to Port Mahon, a gay and dissolute town. Five of the young gentlemen he court-martialed for engaging "in gaming at a gaming table or tables kept by a certain notorious gambler or gamblers in the town of Mahon." The offending midshipmen penitently invoked the commodore's mercy. No duels occurred during his stay in the Mediterranean.

As illustrative of the strict discipline maintained in the Old Navy, the following incident, which is said to have occurred on board one of Rodgers's vessels while she was cruising in the Archipelago in the summer of



THE UNITED STATES SHIP OF THE LINE "NORTH CAROLINA" IN A STORM,  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, *about 1827*

From a photograph in the Bureau of Construction and Repair, United States Navy Department, Washington, D.C. This photograph is from a painting at Sion Hill, Havre de Grace, Maryland, in the possession of Rear-admiral Frederick Rodgers. On the original painting there is the following legend: "U.S.S. North Carolina under a press of sail, weathering the Island of Zembla on the 26th of December, 1826, in a sudden gale from N.N.W. Represented at the moment of splitting her jib in pieces, setting her foretopmast staysail, and brailing up her spanker"





1826, may be quoted. The story is narrated by one of the officers of the vessel: "A short time since one of our lieutenants accidentally heard one of the crew whistling on the quarter-deck. 'Mount that capstan,' said he. 'And whistle until I order you to stop.' 'Aye, aye, sir,' was the ready reply. Whereupon the sailor seated himself upon it and whistled away a length of time, got wearied, made many a wry face, cursed his bad luck, and whistled again. Some six hours passed, and the poor fellow's mouth had assumed rather an odd shape, for whistle he could not; and at length gradually extending his jaws, he asked for a drink of water and drily exclaimed, 'I'm d—d, if I ain't tired of whistling.' The officer of the deck then gave him permission to come down."

The American adventurers who joined the Greeks gave the commodore no little trouble. One young man, William T. Washington, formerly a cadet at West Point, represented himself as a nephew of the venerated general. He planned to enter the Grecian army; but finding a military career somewhat hazardous, he adopted a diplomatic one and became a political agent of the revolutionists. Fearing that he might be arrested as a spy, he renounced his allegiance to the United States and placed himself under the protection of the French flag. He was killed by a random shot, while walking on the beach at Napoli de Romania. Concerning another adventurer, Rodgers once wrote to Lafayette as follows: "It has been intimated to me that a young American by the name of Allen, who has lately been in Paris, experienced from you much kindness and attention. This young man was not long since a midshipman in our navy and owing to conduct of a most dishonorable kind was obliged to leave the service.

After this he went as an adventurer to Greece, where I have understood that in the Greek army he had shown intrepidity, but still even this does not entitle him to your favor so long as he is known to be destitute of moral character."

Early in 1827 the commodore received orders from the department to return home with the "North Carolina" by way of the West Indies. He sailed from Gibraltar in the flag-ship on May thirty-first; and, after touching at Cape Hayti, Port au Prince, and Havana, arrived at Hampton Roads on July 28, 1827, having been absent from the United States two years and four months. He was cordially welcomed home by his many friends. The secretary of the navy expressed to him the entire satisfaction of the department with his official acts. "I hear your cruise has improved your health and made you at least ten years younger," James K. Paulding wrote to him, "and what is not less agreeable that you have by your firmness and steadiness restored the discipline of squadron under your command to what it ought to be. For this you deserve the thanks of the whole country."

#### XIV. HOME LIFE AT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL: 1815-1837

ON Commodore Rodgers's return from the Mediterranean in the summer of 1827, Secretary of the Navy Southard offered him his choice of shore duties. For a time he hesitated between accepting the presidency of the navy board and the commandantship of a navy-yard; but he finally chose the former, being doubtless influenced by the advice of his friends—Southard, Paulding, and others. The commodore had some notion of rejecting both offers, and of retiring to a farm near Havre de Grace and spending the rest of his days in rural quiet. James K. Paulding, navy agent at New York, advised him against this move, in a friendly letter, written in August, 1827:

“Unless I mistake, I know however which way your wishes point. I have no doubt but you want to be shooting canvas backs and playing the horse jockey on the shores of the Susquehanna; and if you are sure—I say sure—that you would be happier there, I should say go and shoot and ride and plant corn and tobacco, and turn your sword into a ploughshare and your cocked-hat into a pigeon-house. But in honest truth I doubt whether a man who has all his life been ploughing the sea will make much figure at ploughing the land. You might make a hand at swapping horses, but upon my soul, my dear commodore, I question whether you would figure greatly in your crops, though I don't mean to undervalue your agricultural skill. There is Commodore Chauncey an example before you. He got

a premium for a pig, but his farming brought him in no premiums. A Gentleman Farmer is a very pretty kind of a gentleman, only he is very apt to get in debt, and to lay out more in improvements than his improvements pay him back again. In the first place you would be cheated, for that is the destiny of a sailor as soon as he puts his foot on the land. The country people moreover make no conscience in cheating a Gentleman Farmer, because as I have often heard them say, 'He don't mind a few dollars.' Still, if a man can give his children a good education, and make both ends meet at the end of the year, for that is a *sine qua non*, the farmer's life is after all the life which of all others I should like if I were not now too old to begin a new system. Upon the whole however, I can't help thinking the Navy Board is the place for you, next to the command of a squadron, and I confess further that I wish to see you there to correct some of the notions and flimflams of certain of your predecessors, or rather successors. I will promise to be a most orderly and obedient Agent, that is provided that I am not brought to an untimely end on the 8th of January next."

The commodore's second term as president of the navy board was almost precisely the same length as his first—a few months short of ten years. With the exception of the relatively brief period which he spent as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean squadron, his residence in Washington covered the years 1815-1837, that is all or a part of the presidential administrations of Madison, Monroe, J. Q. Adams, Jackson, and Van Buren. The young and modest capital on the Potomac which he knew so well bears but little resemblance to its older and prouder self with which we are now familiar. It was a rambling, overgrown village,

of some fifteen thousand inhabitants, with streets incomparably muddy in winter and dusty in summer. It consisted of several clusters of buildings, with long vacant or semivacant spaces intervening. The White House, Capitol, post-office, navy-yard and arsenal, separated a mile or more from each other, were the centers around which the city grew. Georgetown was a detached municipality of about seven thousand people.

How delightfully rural was the capital may be seen from a letter of Paulding written one autumn, about 1816. He said that at that time of year Washington was a dull place, "except to sportsmen, who find excellent shooting about the center of the city. I have seen a great number of quail, plover, and snipe within a couple or three hundred yards of the President's mansion, and they do say that deer abound in the 'slashes,' as they are called, about half a mile north of that building. I can't answer to that fact, but I have seen plenty of rabbits there."

In those early days the society of Washington was somewhat crude and homespun, measured by present standards; but withal genuine and wholesome. Nor was it without charm, dignity, and refinement. Since its numbers were small, the men and women composing it came to know each other well; and many of them were intimate friends. Their social intercourse was frequent, quiet, and agreeable, free from useless conventions and stiff formalities. Conversation was abundant and connected, for the fatigue and impersonality of modern life had not yet reduced men's talk to short detached sentences—unoffending commonplaces that at best merely amuse. The society of the capital was an amalgam of official and residential elements. After the War of 1812 it received a strong military admixture.

Several noted warriors, among others Generals Brown, Scott, Macomb, and Jesup, gave it a flavor of the army; while Commodores Rodgers, Decatur, and Porter, who became permanent residents of the city in 1815, added a salty savor.

Before 1812 there were rarely enough naval officers in Washington to hold a court martial. The first officer to establish a home in the capital was Commodore Thomas Tingey, the commandant of the navy-yard. This warm-hearted, chivalrous gentleman had a fondness for society, and for more than a quarter of a century he took an active part in the balls, banquets, and receptions of his adopted city. Another early resident of the capital was Colonel Franklin Wharton, the commandant of the marine corps. The naval circle at Washington, however, really had its beginning with the advent of Rodgers, Decatur, and Porter in 1815. They were soon followed by other naval officers, who cast in their lot at the seat of government. At the present time the naval population of the capital consists of some thousand persons.

About a mile to the north of the White House on Meridian Hill, Porter soon after his arrival built a "stately castle"—to use the words of one of his lodgers, James K. Paulding. Decatur erected a house, which is still standing, on the corner of H street and Jackson Place, facing Lafayette Square. Rodgers first established his family at Bellevue on the heights of Georgetown; but about 1820 he moved to Greenleaf Point, near the Washington arsenal. Here he purchased two large houses, forming a part of a row which had been built in one of the last years of the eighteenth century; and by means of connecting doors he made them into virtually one house. Greenleaf Point lies at the apex of

the triangle of land between the Potomac River and the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, which unite at Washington. Rodgers's home was on P Street, and its extensive grounds on their western side reached to the Potomac. It was about a mile and a half from the Capitol, and two miles and a half from the White House and Navy Department. The commodore had but few neighbors, and these were mostly tradespeople. Indeed the Point at this time was much like the country or a small rural village. Between it and Pennsylvania Avenue lay long stretches of unoccupied land, with only a dwelling here and there.

About 1835 Rodgers moved to a house which he built on Madison Place, facing Lafayette Square, almost opposite the home of Decatur. The story is told that the ground upon which the Lafayette Square house stood was once owned by Henry Clay, who came into possession of it by the exercise of that avocation, which Mrs. Clay said did not disturb her as Henry always won. The distinguished statesman, so the story goes, transferred his winnings to Commodore Rodgers for a jackass which the commodore had obtained in a foreign port. Clay sent the beast to his celebrated stock-farm in Kentucky where it propagated its kind for many years. Tradition further says that the mules for which this state is so justly famous owe their origin to their "braying grandfather of Lafayette Square." We shall not attempt to separate the truth of this tale from its fiction. It is a fact, however, that the commodore brought a jackass home with him from the Mediterranean in 1827, and that in the same year Clay purchased for him a part of the site on which his Lafayette Square house was built.

After the commodore's death this house was occupied

at different times by several of the leading officials of the government—by Secretary of the Navy James K. Paulding, Secretary of the Treasury Roger Brooke Taney, Secretary of War W. W. Belknap, and Secretaries of State William H. Seward and James G. Blaine. Here in 1865 Seward was assaulted, and here in 1893 Blaine died. In 1859 it was used as a club house, and figured in the notorious Sickles-Key affair. It was torn down in 1895 to make room for the Lafayette Square theater, now the Belasco.

The commodore lived longest, and doubtless most happily, at the Greenleaf Point house, for its location on the river and its rural surroundings were most congenial to him. This is the home that his family remembered most fondly. Here were born four of his children: William Pinkney, a lawyer in New York City; Henry, a lieutenant in the navy, who was lost in the "Albany" in 1854; Ann Minerva, who married Colonel J. N. Macomb, a nephew of General Alexander Macomb (commander-in-chief of the army in 1828-1841); and Augustus Frederick, an assistant in the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Two daughters, Louisa, who married General Montgomery C. Meigs, and Jerusha C. were born at Georgetown. Four children, Robert S., a colonel in the Civil War; Frederick, a midshipman in the navy; John, a rear-admiral in the navy; and Elizabeth, were born at Havre de Grace.

In addition to these ten children, the household of Commodore and Mrs. Rodgers contained an honored member in the person of Mrs. Jerusha Denison, the mother of Mrs. Rodgers. She is remembered by one of her grandchildren as a dear little gentlewoman. "She generally wore a grey silk or black gown, with a voluminous muslin kerchief about her neck and a great close





COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS, 1813

From the *Polyanthos* (Boston), vol. iii, 1. Engraved by John  
R. Smith from a portrait by Henry Williams



cap with lace ruffles, so full and wide that they shaded her small face. She was a gentle creature, but always active and busy. She was slim and erect in figure, with small hands and feet, and a fine spirited countenance; her complexion even in old age was fair and delicate. The 'boys' went to 'Grandma' to bind up their wounds and relate their grievances. She seems in my memory to be always administering cake or salve, figs or plaster, something to soothe the outer and inner man."

During the period of which we write it was common for Washington gentlemen to own slaves, and Rodgers was no exception to the rule. Born south of Mason and Dixon's line he possessed many of the tastes and customs of the well-to-do Southerner. While he accepted the economic system of his section, he was no apologist for it. In 1822 he executed a deed of manumission decreeing the freedom of all his young slaves on their reaching an age at which they would be able to take care of themselves. He owned some ten or twelve negroes, among whom were Butler, his faithful body servant; Hamilton, his coachman; Mammy Hagar, the nurse of his children; Aunt Hannah, the fat cook; Sally, the housemaid; Fortune, the gardener; Isaac and Henry, waiters at table; and Jim, Jacob, and Maria, young pickaninnies.

With his numerous family and his retinue of slaves, the commodore lived in a truly patriarchal manner. The large house at Greenleaf Point, with its slave quarters, its many outbuildings and its extensive grounds, was especially adapted to this style of life. With such masters as Rodgers, slavery was seen at its best. While he rigorously insisted upon obedience from his slaves, he usually treated them with much kindness. He had a practice of buying from them the butter made from

his own cows, and the eggs laid by his own hens. When his thrifty wife would reprove him for this extravagance, he was wont to say that a few cents was not much to him but it meant a great deal to them. He was fond of good horses, and kept two carriages, one for himself and the other for Mrs. Rodgers. With true southern hospitality, the commodore and his lady entertained much, and seldom dined without having several guests at their table. Surrounded by their children, their servants, and their friends, they led a most agreeable and dignified life at the capital.

The daughter of Commodore Rodgers, Mrs. J. N. Macomb, of Washington, has written for her children a most entertaining account of her girlhood days at Greenleaf Point. Through her kindness, the author is permitted to make use of this family document, and is thus able to present a most vivid picture of the commodore's home life:

"My father loved the situation at the Point because it was near the river. He bought the place, no doubt, with a view to the welfare and pleasure of his growing family of boys and girls. We had at the Point two large houses which my father made one by means of communicating doors. There was a large garden extending from the house to the river; in this garden my father delighted. He had planted along the fences the finest raspberries, also the large Antwerp raspberry I remember among them. There were within the borders of our garden a variety of fine peaches, nectarines, and figs; plum trees borne down by the weight of great purple plums, and one large mulberry tree. Such fruit as we enjoyed from that garden I have not seen since. And in that dear old place a family of children grew and sported for many years.

Fortunately the happy hours of our childhood rest in the memory after its disappointments are forgotten. I see before me now as if it were yesterday, the little porch upon which the door opened at the end of our wide old hall. Coral honeysuckles grew all over the porch so that in summer it was a shady bower. Within it, there were two long benches painted green, the floor was of brick. Here children held high revel, but I never saw my father or mother sitting there; they took their ease, if they ever had any, quite on the other side of the great double house; but how can there be ease with such a household? Joy and sorrow there must have been, and sunshine and love smiled upon the household.

“Imagine my father at the foot of our long dinner table, carving for his family and guests. We all silent as mice, but generally full of repressed merriment that sometimes exploded from the very sense of repression. The offender was immediately dismissed in confusion by a look from our father; my mother, a gentle but spirited creature, kept up her share of conversation while she often gave us young ones an expressive, warning glance. My father’s own man, Butler, stood behind his master’s chair and waited on no one else; he was the devoted friend and servant of that loved master to the day of his death, and my father breathed his last in Butler’s arms. Isaac was the waiter, and Henry, his younger brother, assisted him. We were under such painful restraint that I do not remember any pleasure relating to the dining room, excepting the permission to leave it. What pleasure could there be when during the whole course of the meal we could not speak. We never dreamed of asking for anything, but meekly accepted what was put upon our plates; the effect of this

simple arrangement being, as far as I remember, that we generally received a large portion of something we did not like but were nevertheless expected to eat, and a very small portion of what we really cared for. Naturally therefore we sought not to linger at the festive board, but welcomed joyfully the release when my mother gave us a nod, and said, 'Yes, you may go.' Silently we escaped and rushed down the hall, speeding to our loved garden haunts where we might laugh and shout at our will.

"At the foot of this garden was a gate opening on the river, and the boys used often in their glee to fly, without stopping for a breath, from the back door through the gate and down the little terrace to the river. Two boats were there, and often the stable men took the horses to water them by the river side. On one occasion William and Hal were bathing in the river when the men came down the shore with the horses. The boys jumped up behind the men and urged the horses up the bank; just as they came near the stable they saw their father standing at the back gate. Both boys leaped, naked as they were, over the fence among the tall raspberry bushes. Fortunately the shades of evening lent their uncertain light to this escapade, and my father called to the men, 'Did you throw anything over the fence?' 'No, Master, nobody ain't throw'd nothin over no fence whar we was.' Meanwhile the boys had opened the river gate and resumed their garments; when their father appeared at the front door, they were on the lawn. Fearful scratches they must have received, but they were happy in concealing them.

"Near this river gate was a smoke house, called by the servants 'big smoke house' because there was a

smaller one near the kitchen. In front of the big smoke house was an arbor and over it grew in beautiful profusion climbing roses and sweet scented white and pink honeysuckles; over the smoke house grew Virginia creeper so thickly that the whole structure was quite hidden in the happy summer time. Under the arbor and placed against the smoke house were two charming little marble seats. These were the capitals of Corinthian columns from an ancient Greek temple, and were brought home in the 'North Carolina.' When we were in trouble or in sorrow, punished or expecting punishment, these darkly shaded classic seats were our refuge. When we were most merry and afraid of being rebuked for disturbing our elders, to this distant fastness we repaired and there we made the welkin ring.

"Once Isaac, our butler, 'got religion,' and went up to the big smoke house to mourn and pray. Being afraid of interruption from the boys, he climbed up a long ladder always kept there, and knelt on the rafters among the hams and shoulders; and my brothers opened the door silently and listened with awe to the mysterious groans. They did not molest their friend, and they warned me never to go near a person 'getting religion.'

"There was a square white stone or marble carriage block in front of the house, and often the picture of my father as he stood there comes back to me. It was his habit to accompany the ladies visiting the house to the carriage, and after helping them into it he would stand on the block, hat in hand, until the carriage turned the corner. Perhaps the first remembrance I have of my father's impressive figure is on some great occasion when he was going to a ball with my mother. We young ones should have been in bed, and generally were so ere night came, but our good mammy had come out

of the nursery and brought me with her to see the 'Mars-ter and ole Miss.' The commodore was in full uniform, embroidered coat, and white kersey trousers, embroidered sword belt, and sword. How bright and fresh and splendid he looked, a gallant figure. Presently my mother came down the staircase. 'Now jes look at ole Miss,' says mammy. 'She looks better'n any o' her chil'n ever will look; indeed she do! Tell you! Mistres' ain't got to stand back for nobody! My, she do become dat gown!' My mother was dressed in a black satin gown with lace sleeves, and she had a little lace cap on her head. On her arm she carried the white cashmere shawl she always used at such times. The shawl had a history; I think it was given to my father by the Turkish Pasha, as an acknowledgment of the service rendered when my father rescued some Turkish women from Greek pirates and ransomed them by paying fifty dollars of his own money. He took them to Smyrna in the 'North Carolina' and released them. The shawl had been made for a favorite inmate of the Pasha's harem, and my father was told that it took eighteen months to make it. Now, moth eaten and discolored, it surely is not very beautiful, but in the days of my youth it seemed a shawl of great worth and respectability.

"My dear mother had a natural gift for teaching. She trained her servants to be so good and respectable, and taught us children to love truth and honor. Her sons were brought up to be as chivalric as the knights of old. She was very fond of reading and seemed to have a cultivated taste in literature. She loved Thomson's Seasons, the Rape of the Lock, Gray's Elegy, etc. The story of the 'Lovely young Lavinia once had friends; and fortune smil'd, deceitful, on her birth,' my



mother used to recite to us when she was dressing, or sometimes she would tell us some pretty classic story when in the evening we sat before the fire; and these were deeply impressed on my memory. Whether prose or poetry the charm of her musical and well modulated voice lent an added grace to the author's words.

"As I have brought you to the dining room fire, I will take the opportunity of describing to you the hospitable, many roomed house at Greenleaf Point. There were four large, three story houses, facing south, standing apart from any other place, and quite near to the United States Arsenal. As I told you, my father owned two of these houses. In the third one lived at one time my Aunt Louisa, Mrs. Wadsworth, and her husband, Captain Wadsworth of the navy, uncle of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. They were a very handsome pair; he tall with curling brown hair and dark blue eyes, she also tall and dark with glowing complexion and great soft black eyes. At another time that house was occupied by Dr. Buck, a stout fine looking man, whose appearance I remember well from an incident which stamped him on my memory forever.

"There was a broad flat pavement in front of these houses, and just outside the pavement a row of locust trees, very tall and graceful. In the summer they were laden with long rich blossoms, and the house used to be full of their perfume mingled with that of the lilacs, a clump of which grew just inside the front gate and all along that side of the garden. There was a lawn before the house extending to the river bank; my father often stood on the edge of that bank watching some steamboat or perhaps merely studying the weather and the water. The corner house, nearest the river, was the one best furnished and most used, with roses growing

over it; a broad area under the whole structure had many kitchen windows, and there was scarcely a moment when some little dark faces were not to be seen at those windows, and dusky figures flitting about this area.

"The hall of the corner house was dark red; painted, I think. In this long hall I remember no furniture excepting dark mahogany chairs and a long narrow mahogany table. Near the end of the hall were green baize swinging doors, and beyond them the wide door opening on the garden and the little porch which I have described to you. The room at the front of the house opening from the hall was the parlor. I remember when to make these lower rooms warmer the brass andirons were dismissed, and my father had grates put in to burn anthracite coal. In this parlor was an old fashioned mahogany Recamier sofa, horse-hair cover, I must admit; a center table and chairs of the same wood; an 'easy chair' for my father's use, but covered with horse-hair, stood near the fire-place; on the mantel-piece was our little white clock, but it had in those days a bunch of pink roses in a vase on top of it, and was enclosed in a glass case. Opening from the parlor, was the dining room. I remember only of this room the big mahogany dining table and the sideboard, sparkling with glass and silver. There were some cupboards in the wall; the sideboard was a very big affair and is now at Sion Hill. Yes, I remember also the wine cooler that stood beside the sideboard—a very beautiful bit of mahogany.

"I am going to take you back to my mother's room. Fancy her standing in a dimity wrapper at the mirror, combing her pretty yellow hair. She stood before an old high mahogany bureau, the mirror placed on it.

A book lay before her, Gray's Poems; she was teaching me to read Gray's Elegy. I know it was summer time because the windows were wide open and the wind blew some sprays of locust blossom into the room; my mother picked one up and held it to her gentle face. 'Not so sweet as it is on the trees,' she said.

"Suddenly the door is thrown open, evidently from the nursery. Mammy Hagar, always so respectful to her mistress, rushes in noisily exclaiming, 'Come Mistus, come, save poor Fortune!' 'Why Hagar are you crazy?' says my mother. 'What are you thinking of?' 'Mistus,' said Hagar, the tears streaming down her cheeks, 'I ain't got no time to talk; fasten up your ha'r and come down stairs. Don't you hear the fuss out da! De constables is got our poor Fortune. Yes'm, dey are carrying him off to jail. Yes'm, to sell him to Georgy.' 'How can I help it, Hagar? The Commodore is not here; I can do nothing, would you have me go into the street half dressed?' 'Mistus, that ain't no count now; you got to come.' And Hagar bound up the yellow hair and threw a light shawl over the little dimity dressing gown.

"All the inhabitants of the nursery followed, even Miss Margaret Clark was on post, and more negroes than one would suppose the establishment could contain swarmed after my mother and mammy as they ran down the staircase. Yes, my dear little mother ran fast as her blood warmed up to the fray. They rushed into the street, she and Mammy with their retinue of white and black followers. As my mother passed Dr. Buck's house, she saw that gentleman sitting at his parlor window. She called out, 'Dr. Buck, I want your help! Please come at once! One of the Commodore's servants is being carried off illegally.' 'Madam, at your

service!' said the gallant Doctor, following close behind her. 'Oh, Dr. Buck,' said my mother as we reached the corner, 'they are putting Fortune in that carriage.'

"There at the corner and near the old pump was a promiscuous crowd; all our servants and every one's else in the neighborhood seemed to be grouped around a large four-seated carriage, into which two men had just succeeded in putting poor Fortune. Never shall I forget his agonized and pleading face when he saw my mother. His blue shirt was open at the back and almost torn off him, one sleeve had been pulled out and his black arm was bare; a great piece had been grabbed out of his shirt. One word only he spoke on seeing my mother, 'Oh, my mistress!!' It was but a gasp, as the carriage door was being closed on him. Dr. Buck, urged by my mother, leaped into it, gave Fortune a desperate pull and then a push, and cried out, 'Now, run for your life!' Fortune required no second bidding; he was gone like an arrow from the bow. The negroes formed around the fugitive, jostling and impeding the constables as they pursued breathlessly. But 'click' went the latch of my father's gate. Fortune had reached his goal, and was within my father's domain where no one dared pursue him.

"And now I must explain to you that Fortune Scott had been at his own urgent entreaty hired by my father for a term of years from his master, an old gentleman who lived in the country, and who had a dissipated son whose method of raising money was that of selling his father's slaves whenever he found a chance of doing so without his father's knowledge. Fortune was a very good man, capable, industrious, strong, and fine looking. He was our gardener, and he was always busy keeping

everything in good order that fell to his care; but he was in constant dread of being seized by this young ruffian, his master, to pay some gambling debt.

"There was outside of our place and at the corner of the stable furthest from the house, a pump of water much esteemed in the neighborhood. I remember well its iron ladle and square stone basin. There the servants used to congregate with their pitchers and pails; and Fortune in the heat of the summer afternoon had stepped out of our back gate to get a drink of water from this cool fountain. The young master and his myrmidons had been on the watch for him for several days without his hearing of it, and no sooner had he reached the corner than they all jumped upon him. Fortunately Mammy Hagar was down stairs 'cl'ar starching,' and brought the news promptly. Had the men come inside of my father's domain I believe they would have been answerable to the law, but not so when the poor slave was on the public street.

"The sequel to this story is that my father was going through the market a few days after Fortune's adventure, when Isaac who was following his master with the baskets said, 'Marster, yonda's one of dem constables now, what had holt o' Fortune.' 'Where?' said my father. 'Marster, right over yonda buying his meat.' Upon which my father stepped up to the unconscious constable, and said, 'You rascal, you! Are you the fellow that undertook to carry off a servant of mine?' and forthwith knocked the man down. The excitement gave great amusement in the market house, and my father jumped into his carriage and drove away from the scene.

"In the middle of the day we children had some bread and jam; about half past four we dined with our

father and mother, all of us being present unless there were guests. In the evening there were tea and cake. In spite of the distance to our house from town, my mother had many visitors, and cake and wine were handed to them by Isaac on a silver salver. In the summer time visitors were ushered into the 'big drawing room' in the second story, always stately and cool; but in the winter they were received in the front parlor down stairs, which was a warm and most charming winter room, with southern windows and big fire-place.

"The memories of Greenleaf Point crowd so thick upon one another, I am afraid of writing too much, and yet I must tell you: One day, after his dinner and his nap, my father was sitting in the hall examining and fitting a new silk hat. These head coverings are acknowledged to be stupid ugly things, yet all men love and respect them. Behold my father, then, placidly smoothing his new hat with a white silk handkerchief. Suddenly the front door opens and three merry boys come trooping in—Robert, Fred, and John. My father on seeing them is reminded of some misdemeanor of theirs not yet accounted for—in regard to horses, I think. He calls out, 'Stop, boys, I want to speak to you!' The two elder ones have already got to the end of the hall and are apparently out of hearing; only John, the youngest of the trio, is obliged to turn back and meet his father's wrath. He approaches and stands silently before him. 'So you young rascals have been riding my horses bare-backed, I hear! Is this so, you little devil?' No answer from the culprit. Suddenly my father raises his hand, still holding the hat, and strikes John with it. Alas, alas, for the hat! most weak as a weapon of defense, even in that powerful hand! There stands John, motionless with terror, the top of his curly brown

head only visible above the wreck. 'Get out of my sight, you rascal!' cries out my father, seizing the hat. Only too glad to escape, away speeds John. The other boys watching the scene through the green blinds, say, 'What was he doing John, when you shut the door?' Silently and speedily he rushes, followed by the others, to the very top of the garden where he walks on his hands, rolls on the grass, and performs other feats indicative of a state of excitement and suppressed merriment. 'Why don't you speak, John? What is father doing?' 'Why, he's trying to mend his new hat! He is fitting the top on! That's what he's doing!' Peals of laughter from the two!

"Mr. Tobias Lear was a friend of my father. He had been private secretary to General Washington and lived at Mount Vernon, where he married a niece of Mrs. Washington, Miss Fanny Henley, the sister of Commodore Henley, who married in my father's house at Greenleaf Point, Miss Eliza Denison. Mr. Lear became consul to the Barbary Powers; he held this position, for several years, during the administration, I think, of Thomas Jefferson. Mrs. Lear was with him abroad. When they returned to this country, they brought with them many foreign articles of dress and vertu. They lived in the house which afterwards belonged to Captain Ramsay on G Street. My parents used often to spend the evening with their friends the Lears. Mrs. Lear had no children, but Mr. Lincoln Lear, the son of Mr. Lear's first wife, lived with them and was loved by both. He was a lawyer.

"My father and mother had been making a late visit to the Lears one evening, and as they were bidding him goodbye, Mr. Lear said, 'I will walk with you, commodore, a little way.' He accompanied them, slow-

ly strolling and talking; at last as they were near home, he stopped and said, 'Good-bye, Mrs. Rodgers! Good-bye commodore!' pressing my father's hand warmly. The next morning very early, my parents were sent for. Something terrible had happened at Mr. Lear's. He had killed himself soon after leaving my father. My mother always fancied that he wished to say something to my father, which her presence prevented; and they both remembered that his farewell to them had been more tender and lingering than usual. However, he died and left no sign. There was not a conjecture, even, of the cause of his death. He seemed well and vigorous, quiet and self-contained, but not unhappy.

"His wife was a beautiful woman, of gentle manners; her profile was as correct as if carved in marble, but she seemed cold as marble too. Mr. Lear I did not know, but Mrs. Lear I remember; and she lived during a long widowhood in a two story house on Pennsylvania Avenue, with a little wing adjoining it, which was Mr. Lincoln Lear's office. Mrs. Lear's parlor was hung with Algerine curtains of a pretty deep red; she had a Turkey carpet on her parlor floor, and in the corner there was a cabinet with glass doors. The length of my mother's visits I can form no idea of, but whether they were twenty minutes or hours in duration, the time sped quickly with me, for I stood in silent awe before the cabinet, gazing at its contents. There were behind those glass doors some odd bits of Oriental china, some filigree silver, some queerly dressed dolls (Turkish and Moorish), some decorated pipes, some alabaster figures; nothing that would now be rich or rare, but which to me represented all the fabled wealth of fairyland or of Aladdin's palace. Those oriental gewgaws, upon which I feasted my eyes, went with me and became the



basis and fabric of my young dreams. Mrs. Lear herself, wore a very scant black silk gown, finished around the edge with points, and she usually had a black ribbon around her little classic head. Over this she wore a thin muslin cap with a broad flapping ruffle, and yet she was beautiful! She had dark blue eyes with black brows and lashes; a most delicate ivory-tinted complexion, and perfectly regular features. Her hands and feet were very small.

"When the house in President's Square, now called Lafayette Square, was ready for occupancy, the family, being rooted in the old country home, was in no hurry to flit. I think we did not go into the new house until 1835, when I was going to school at Mademoiselle Breschard's on F Street, where the Ebbitt House now stands; and just opposite was Mr. John Quincy Adams's, whom I remember very well. He was a man of very cold and silent manners. Mrs. Adams was then living, and with them was his daughter-in-law, Mrs. John Adams, who with two charming little daughters made up the household. Little Fanny Adams died when still a child. She was a great pet with her grandfather, a pretty fair-haired child that all the school loved. Louisa, the elder, married Mr. Johnson, her cousin.

"Sister Lou used to sing in the choir of St. John's church, and I remember she wore a pale green bonnet of vast proportions, with pink roses in it, very becoming to her. The choir was just over the chancel. The aisles were of brick, and the pews were high and square; only the tops of peoples' heads were seen when they were seated, and children were not visible at all. Our pew was at the top of the church, on the left hand side as you go in. On the opposite side were Mrs. Commodore Stewart, with her mother, Mrs. Tudor and her daughter

Delia, now Mrs. Parnell, mother of Charles Stewart Parnell. Mrs. Tudor was a very old woman when I first saw her, yet she used to totter up the aisle on Sunday in a white gown, with a white bonnet and veil on, powdered and painted cheeks – a ghastly sight.

“Commodore Stewart had once been a suitor of Miss Mayo, afterwards Mrs. Winfield Scott, who boasted that she had received fifty offers of marriage. Miss Mayo was staying with Mrs. Madison, and my father and mother were present at a dinner there, when a letter from Commodore Stewart offering his hand and heart to Miss Mayo was being handed about as a joke. My father folded this letter up when it came near him and handed it back to Miss Mayo, requesting her to put it aside as he could not allow the men present to amuse themselves at the expense of a brother officer. My mother said he looked so angry that she tried to touch him with her foot under the table, but she was too little to reach him. However, Miss Mayo smilingly pocketed the letter, and all was peace.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1828, Commodore and Mrs. Rodgers lost their second son, Midshipman Frederick Rodgers, when he was only seventeen years old. One morning in April he and three of his young friends, Midshipmen Slidell, Harrison and Hunter, left the Norfolk navy-yard in a sail-boat expecting to spend the day in sport and recreation. When they were about three miles from the yard, their boat was struck by a squall; it suddenly capsized, sank, and carried the boys down with it. Rodgers, Hunter, and Harrison rose to the surface, but Slidell was imprisoned in the boat and was drowned. Rodgers, who

<sup>36</sup> Macomb, Mrs. J. N. *Memoirs of My Girlhood Days in Washington*, 54-100; quoted in part and with a few slight changes.

was an excellent swimmer, asked his two companions if they could swim. Hunter replied that he could, but Harrison said that he could not. Rodgers then dived down to the boat and soon came up with one of the oars, by means of which he and Hunter supported Harrison. Happening to recollect that he had tied his favorite dog in the boat, Rodgers dived a second time and tried to release his pet. Failing in this, he again went to the aid of Harrison, and he and Hunter started towards the shore with him, cheering him with encouraging words and assuring him that he would be saved. Harrison begged his companions to leave him to his fate, declaring that he did not fear death and that he did not wish them to lose their lives in a fruitless attempt to save his. Finally Harrison's strength failed him; he released his hold on the oar, sank, and was drowned. The two survivors now swam toward a schooner that was bearing down toward them, still some distance away. Rodgers gave the oar to Hunter, and soon left his companion behind him. But, completely exhausted, he sank before he could reach the vessel. Hunter managed to keep himself afloat until he was rescued. The heroism of these midshipmen has never been surpassed in our navy.

The authorities at the Norfolk navy-yard exerted themselves to recover the bodies of the three boys, but their efforts were fruitless. Grieved beyond measure, the commodore went to Norfolk and directed the work of dragging the river. After several days' labor, his melancholy search was rewarded with success, and he returned to Washington with the body of his son, which was laid to rest in the Congressional Cemetery. After this tragedy, the Commodore and Mrs. Rodgers were never again quite the same. Frederick's place in the

navy was taken by his younger brother John—the Rear-admiral John Rodgers of the Civil War.

The death of Decatur, which happened eight years before that of Frederick Rodgers, was severely felt by the commodore, who was somewhat older than Decatur and who loved him with an almost paternal affection. They had long been closely associated in the navy, and from 1815 to 1820 had met each other daily at the office of the navy board. When Decatur was challenged by Commodore James Barron, he sought the counsel of Rodgers, who advised him not to accept the challenge, telling him that his reputation for bravery was too well established to suffer from a refusal. Rodgers also declined to act as Decatur's second—an office that finally fell to Bainbridge.

Commodore Barron, soon after his trial in 1808 and his suspension from duty in the navy, entered the merchant service and went abroad. Notwithstanding that his term of suspension expired in February, 1813, he remained in Europe throughout the War of 1812. On his return to the United States in 1818, he sought active service in the navy. His claims were resisted by every naval captain, except one, on the grounds that as matters then stood an imputation lay against him for not fighting for his country in her hour of need. Decatur took a prominent part in resisting Barron's restoration to duty, holding that his conduct since the Chesapeake-Leopard affair had been such as ought to bar his readmission into the service. It should be said, however, that Decatur never knew the reason assigned by Barron for his continued absence abroad, lack of means to pay his passage home. The differences between the two officers finally led to a challenge from Barron, which Decatur accepted, although he declared that he

bore Barron no ill-will and therefore had no desire to cause his death but would only wound him in the hip.

According to the preliminaries agreed to by the two seconds, Captains Bainbridge and Elliott, the duel was to be fought with pistols, at a distance of eight yards. It took place at nine o'clock in the morning of March twenty-second, 1820, at Bladensburg near Washington. After the ground had been measured, the pistols had been loaded, and the principals had taken their positions, Barron said to Decatur that "he hoped, on meeting in another world, they would be better friends than in this;" and Decatur replied, "I have never been your enemy, sir." Both officers fired so nearly together that only one report was heard. Barron fell wounded in the right thigh. Decatur stood for a moment erect, pressed his hand to his right side, and then fell, remarking "I am mortally wounded, at least I believe so, and wish that I had fallen in defence of my country." The ball passed through his abdomen.

Several of Decatur's friends, Rodgers, Porter, and Doctors Trevett and Washington of the navy, were at hand to attend him should he be hurt. As soon as the shots were fired they ran to his assistance. Rodgers, with the aid of Trevett, helped him to his carriage; and supporting him, he had him driven rapidly to his home at Lafayette Square, which was reached at half-past ten o'clock. Rodgers remained at the bedside of the unfortunate officer until his death, about twelve hours later. He was one of the witnesses of Decatur's will, which was signed a few hours before he died. Rodgers, Tingey, Porter, Macdonough, and Chauncey served as pallbearers at Decatur's funeral, one of the largest ever held at the Capital. The pistol

used by Decatur is still in the possession of the Rodgers family.

The commodore probably found his income but little more than sufficient for the support of a large family and the maintenance of a dignified station in society. As commissioner of the navy his pay was thirty-five hundred dollars a year, almost double what it had been as captain. He was able to supplement his salary, in a measure, by returns from commercial ventures. In 1815, he formed a partnership with Howes and Charles W. Goldsborough in a lumber, brick, and lime business. He also made investments in several canals and speculated moderately in Washington realty. He was a director of the Bank of Columbia, and president of the Potomac Fire Insurance Company.

The commodore's notable service in the navy, his important station as president of the board of navy commissioners, and his rank as senior naval officer, made him a distinguished character at the capital. No important occasion, whether it were a public dinner, a Fourth of July celebration, or a state funeral, was complete without his presence. Like most sailors he was a man of few words, and his speeches at banquets as a rule did not extend beyond the offering of a toast. Often the sentiment proposed by him took a practical turn, as may be seen from one that he gave at a dinner in honor of General Andrew Jackson at Alexandria, Virginia, in 1815: "Agriculture, commerce, and manufacture; the two bowers and the sheet anchor by which alone our country rides in safety." At a dinner at Washington in 1824 in honor of Lafayette, the commodore's toast was "General Lafayette; the friend of mankind, the consistent champion of liberal principles."

As a citizen of the capital, Rodgers performed his

civic duties with exemplary fidelity. He served on the board of public health, and also on the board of aldermen. His influence was occasionally sought by aspiring politicians, desirous of becoming judges, members of the cabinet, congressmen, navy agents, or justices of the peace. Henry Wheaton, when he was a candidate for the Supreme Bench, solicited his aid; as did also Cadwallader D. Colden who wished to be made secretary of the navy. He knew well many of the public men of his time, and counted as his friends some of the leading statesmen of both political parties—among others, Madison, Monroe, J. Q. Adams, Hayne, and Clay. His sterling qualities of character, his social and official standing, and his popularity with all classes, won for him an honored place among the early residents of the capital.





## XV. LAST YEARS: 1827-1838

COMMODORE Rodgers's second term as president of the navy board began in October, 1827, and ended on May 1, 1837. His fellow commissioners during his second term were Commodores Tingey, Stewart, Morris, Chauncey, Patterson, and Warrington. Since his work at the navy board has already been fully described, it is necessary in this connection to refer only to certain new duties that now fell to him.

Rodgers was long interested in the subject of dry docks, and frequently during his first term as navy commissioner recommended their construction. In 1822, an inclined plane which he invented as a substitute for a dock was erected at the Washington navy-yard, and the frigate "Potomac" was safely hauled up on shore by means of it. Finally in 1827 the construction of two dry docks was begun, one at Norfolk and the other at Boston, and six years later they were completed. The commodore was present when the battle-ship "Delaware," the first vessel to be docked in the United States, entered the Norfolk dock on June 17, 1833, the anniversary of the battle of Bunker Hill. Exactly one week later the historic frigate "Constitution" entered the Boston dock, under most impressive circumstances. In accordance with the orders of the commandant, all the officers of the Boston yard assembled in full dress to witness the event. Vice-president Van Buren, Secretary of the Navy Woodbury, and Secretary of War Cass were present; and President Jackson was expected, but was detained at home by illness. A large crowd of peo-

ple added life and color to the scene. Commodore Isaac Hull appeared once more upon the deck of the "Constitution," the officer and the vessel that "first broke the charm of British naval invincibility on the ocean."

The creation of several new naval establishments during the decade 1827-1837 considerably increased the work of the commissioners. In 1829, a naval asylum at Philadelphia and a naval hospital at Norfolk were built, and a few years later additional hospitals were constructed at Chelsea (near Boston), New York, and Pensacola. The naval asylum, now called the naval home, was built as a refuge for officers and seamen incapacitated for duty by age, accident, or sickness. In 1836, a rope walk was erected at the Boston yard, and in 1837 a naval apprentice system was established. In 1830, the Depot of Charts and Instruments, out of which grew the Naval Observatory and Hydrographical Office, was founded in Washington. During the last years of Rodgers's service on the board extensive preparations were made for a South Sea exploring expedition, which finally set sail in 1838 under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes.

In 1835, the construction of the first vessel of the steam navy, destined soon to supplant the old sailing navy, was begun. This steamship, which is known as the "Fulton the Second," was built in accordance with the plans of the navy commissioners. How small she was may be seen from a comparison of her dimensions with those of one of our recent battle-ships of the "Dreadnought" type: lengths one hundred eighty and five hundred ten feet, beams thirty-five and eighty-five feet, and displacements twelve hundred and twenty thousand tons. She carried only seventy-five tons of

coal, a quantity deemed sufficient for three days' steaming.

The views of the commissioners respecting the advisability of building a steam fleet were much in advance of those of Congress. In 1835, they made a report recommending the early employment of steam vessels by the navy, and in the following year they prepared a ship-building program that provided for the construction of twenty-five steamships. According to this program the fleet was to consist of one hundred fifteen vessels: fifteen ships of the line, twenty-five frigates, twenty-five sloops of war, twenty-five steamships, and twenty-five smaller vessels. They estimated that the completed navy would require thirty thousand seamen.

Although the commodore's professional schooling, like that of his fellow officers, was picked up in the merchant marine service and on board ships of war, he was nevertheless a strong advocate of a naval academy. In 1826, when he was in the Mediterranean, he tried to obtain plans of the naval school at Carthage, for use in the construction of a similar institution in the United States. In 1831 as president of the navy board he wrote a letter to the secretary of the navy setting forth the views of the commissioners respecting a naval academy. The new institution was to be located at Annapolis, and a naval captain was to act as its superintendent. Instruction was to be given in "all the living languages," mathematics, surveying, navigation, drawing and fencing. A small ship-rigged vessel, armed with several cannon, was to be stationed at the school for use in teaching seamanship and the handling of guns.

Each year the commodore, accompanied by his two fellow commissioners and often by Secretary Golds-

borough, made a tour of inspection of the northern navy-yards. His last trip was that of 1836. Leaving Washington early in September, the commissioners first visited the Philadelphia navy-yard and naval asylum, then in charge of Commodore James Barron. At New York they stayed at Bunker's Inn, where they held several sessions of the navy board and consulted with experts regarding engines for the "Fulton the Second." On their way east they stopped at Providence and made an examination of Narragansett Bay with a view to the selection of a site for a naval station. After inspecting the Boston and Portsmouth yards, they returned to the capital early in October.

Rodgers performed his official duties with the conscientiousness of the true Scotchman. His attendance at the office of the commissioners was almost as regular as the movements of the sun. Even when in ill health, he rarely missed a meeting of the board, being at times the only commissioner present. His carriage, driven by his coachman Hamilton and drawn by two handsome horses, going to and from the navy department, was long a familiar sight at the capital.

There is a story related by John Quincy Adams that illustrates the commodore's blunt, straightforward way of transacting business at the naval office. When Jackson became president, he and his followers were inclined to find excuses for discrediting Adams's administration and the work of many of Adams's chief officials. A charge was trumped up against Rodgers; and one day Amos Kendall, a cheap subaltern of the president, and John P. Van Ness, the mayor of Washington, made their appearance at the navy department to investigate him. "Rodgers told them," Adams said, "that if he had been guilty of official misdemeanor he had a right to a trial

by his peers; that there was the door of the office, out of which he recommended them to retire to save him and them the mortification of his kicking them out, which he should certainly otherwise do. They sneaked off, and then an article of the *Globe* disclaimed any intention of trying the commodore, and pretended that the enquiry was only of some malversation of his clerks."

The commodore was a remarkably strong and muscular man, and many stories are told of his feats of strength. Once on shipboard some of his sailors were trying to move a heavy anchor weighing a thousand pounds, and were making much noise and little progress. Becoming impatient, he ran forward, pushed them aside, and lifted the anchor himself. One day a contractor came to the commissioner's office with samples of cotton sailcloth, which material he was anxious to introduce into the navy. He claimed that it was superior to hemp cloth and insisted that it would be able to resist the heaviest gale of wind, urging the commodore to test its strength. Rodgers quietly took up one of the samples, and, stretching it with his fingers, severed it as if it were a cambric handkerchief.

As a young man he was rarely or never ill, and not until his sixtieth year did his vigorous health show signs of breaking. In the summer of 1832 the Asiatic cholera, in a most virulent form, made its appearance in the United States; and in August it reached Washington where it obtained quite a foothold owing to the presence there of a large number of negroes and ignorant foreigners who lived in an unsanitary manner. Late in September Benjamin Lincoln Lear, an unmarried son of Tobias Lear, was seized with this dreadful disease, which no one understood and of which every one was afraid. True always to his friends at whatever personal

cost, Rodgers nursed young Lear, was with him when he died, laid him in his coffin, and buried him. On the day after the funeral, the commodore was stricken with an acute attack of the cholera. For several weeks he was exceedingly sick and was confined to his bed. His robust constitution, however, came off victor in the struggle with the disease, but it was shattered and never regained its former strength. From this time his friends observed a gradual decline in his health and a perceptible failing of his memory. The regularity of his attendance at the board, however, was but little relaxed. One summer he was persuaded to try the waters at the Sweet Sulphur Springs in Virginia, where, with Mrs. Rodgers, he spent several weeks, but without improving his health.

Finally, he decided to go abroad for a change of air and scene; and on May 1, 1837, he resigned his commissionership. The *National Intelligencer* noted his departure from the navy board and the city in the following kindly words:

"We understand that Commodore Rodgers, one of the oldest and most faithful of our public servants, and for many years the senior officer of the Navy, and President of the Board of Navy Commissioners, has resigned his latter commission with the concurrence of the President of the United States and of the Secretary of the Navy, who have both on all occasions manifested their esteem and good wishes towards him. For several years his health has been impaired, owing, it is believed, to an attack of the cholera. He seeks its restoration in relaxation from the cares of official duties, and in a trip across the Atlantic, under the full persuasion that he will experience much benefit from breathing the sea air, which may be said to be his native element. Few men

living have for such a length of time encountered the perils and privations of a sea life, few have rendered more important services to their country. The venerable Commodore will be accompanied on his voyage with the best wishes of the community in which he has lived so long, and their earnest prayers for the recovery of his health."

On May tenth, accompanied by his faithful body-servant, Butler, he embarked at New York on board the packet-ship "Montreal," bound for London. He spent several weeks in England, visiting not only the metropolis, but also Plymouth and Portsmouth; and he was everywhere shown much attention by the British Admiralty and the officers of the Royal Navy. At Plymouth he was the guest of Admiral Sir James and Lady Hillyar, two dear friends with whom he had often exchanged hospitalities on the Mediterranean station. Of the commodore's stay in London, Mrs. Macomb relates the following incident:

"Butler, during my father's visit to England, wrote every week a letter giving an account of all their proceedings to my mother, his letters always beginning 'Honored Mistress.' He related that he could have married many a pretty English girl if he had been a single man, for they made much of him in the servants' hall, and the maids took him to church, and in the evening loved to have him sing and play on the guitar which was an accomplishment of his. He told my mother that the Doctor wished the Commodore to ride every day when they were in London, so my father told Butler to get him a good horse—'And Mistress, I got for my Master the best horse I could find in the livery stable and I got another for myself, for I seen that every English gentleman had a servant behind him; but I did

not dare to tell my master I had hired that horse. The groom was to hold him round the corner till Master cantered off, and then I mounted and followed him. He did not see me until he was in the Park, and then he turned round for to look at somethin' and he seen me. He said, "What! Butler, you rascal, are you on horse-back?" I said, "Yes, Master, let me follow you. Don't you see, Master, all the great gentlemen has their men after them?" Master just laughed and shook his head at me, and after that when I got a horse for him I always ordered one for Butler too. Not a one of them all sot his horses straighter, or rode free'r than my Master.'"

Late in August, 1837, the commodore returned to the United States, with his health but little improved. After remaining a few weeks at his home on Lafayette Square, in Washington, he went to the naval asylum at Philadelphia and placed himself under the care of his medical friend, Dr. Thomas Harris of the navy. He was still attended by his devoted valet. Mrs. Rodgers also accompanied him and took rooms near the asylum. The commodore's mind weakened somewhat with his body, and his hold upon life was slowly relaxed. A few hours before his death, when it was seen that he was rapidly failing, Mrs. Rodgers was sent for, but he was unconscious when she reached his bedside. His last words were addressed to his valet, "Butler do you know the Lord's Prayer?" "Yes, Master." "Then repeat it for me." He died in the arms of his faithful servant, on August 1, 1838.

Soon after the commodore's death, his body was removed from the asylum to the home of Commodore James Biddle, on Walnut Street, Philadelphia, near Tenth Street. It was laid to rest on the afternoon of



August third, in a most impressive manner. In compliance with the orders of Commodore Charles Stewart, the commandant of the Philadelphia navy-yard, Rodgers's funeral was attended by all the naval officers in the city, in full uniform. At the head of the procession to the cemetery was the First Brigade of the Pennsylvania Militia, commanded by General A. M. Prevost, and attended by the navy-yard band and the German Washington Guards band. The flags and side arms of the brigade were dressed in black. Following it, in order, were a detachment of marines, the clergymen, the hearse bearing the casket which was draped with the national flag, the pallbearers among whom were Commodores Charles Stewart and James Biddle and Captain William H. Shubrick of the navy and Major Hartman Bache and Captain William A. Thornton of the army, eight United States seamen, the chief mourners, officers of the army and navy, foreign ministers, judges, government officials, and citizens to the number of several thousand. During the movement of the procession minute guns were fired at the navy-yard. The casket was conveyed to Christ Church burying ground, at the corner of Arch and Fifth streets. It was removed from the hearse and carried to the grave by the eight seamen, who were preceded by the marines. After the Episcopal burial service had been read by the Reverend Doctor Stephen Higginson Tyng, of the Church of the Epiphany of Philadelphia, the casket was lowered into the grave; and the marines fired a farewell salute of three volleys.

On August third, Rodgers's friend, James K. Paulding, now secretary of the navy, issued at Washington the following general naval order: "As a mark of respect to the memory of Commodore John Rodgers, late

senior officer of the navy of the United States, who died in Philadelphia on the 1st instant, the flags of the navy-yards, stations, and vessels of the United States navy are to be hoisted half-mast, and thirteen minute guns fired at noon on the day after the receipt of this order. Officers of the navy and marine corps are to wear crape for thirty days."

In the spring of 1839 the body of the commodore was removed to the family burial site in the Congressional Cemetery at Washington. This burying ground owes its name to a practice that Congress long followed of erecting in it cenotaphs to the memory of those senators and representatives who died in office. It overlooks the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, and commands a pleasing view of the green hills beyond. Here in 1828 Midshipman Frederick Rodgers was buried; and here now father, mother, son, and two daughters sleep side by side. The commodore's final resting-place is marked by a plain pyramidal monument of sandstone, about six feet high. On one of its sides is the following simple inscription: "Commodore John Rodgers; Born, 1772;<sup>37</sup> Died, Senior Officer of the United States Navy, August 1st, 1838; After forty-one years of brilliant and important service." On the opposite side are these words: "Minerva Denison Rodgers; Beloved wife of Commodore John Rodgers; Fond and faithful Mother of eleven Children; Born, 1784; Married, 1806; Died, 1877." On a third side is the epitaph of Frederick Rodgers.

Adjoining the commodore's grave is the tomb of his fleet captain in the Mediterranean in 1825, Commodore Daniel T. Patterson. Not far away lies his successor as president of the navy board, Commodore Isaac

<sup>37</sup> In his autobiography Commodore Rodgers gives the date of his birth as 1773.

Chauncey. Near the entrance to the cemetery is buried one of Rodgers's dearest naval friends, Commodore Thomas Tingey. His two army friends, Generals Jacob Brown and Alexander Macomb, rest near him. In this city of silence are also buried Benjamin Lincoln Lear and his father Tobias Lear, whose tomb records that he was early distinguished as the private secretary and familiar friend of the illustrious Washington. Not far from the graves of the Lears is the monument of William Pinkney, Rodgers's brother-in-law.

Of the naval officers of his time, Commodore Rodgers was the type and exemplar. He was the incarnation of the spirit of the Old Navy, of that service whose watchwords were order, discipline, obedience, duty, victory, and glory. He was of a highly vigorous and active temperament, and to the last his tread was firm, his carriage military, and his figure erect. His features were virile and spirited, denoting quickness of temper, indomitable will, and great energy. Although essentially a man of action, he was somewhat of a reader of books, preferring in fiction the sea stories of James Fenimore Cooper. As a self-educated man, he possessed much homely practical knowledge acquired on land and sea. He cared little for the creeds and conventions of the religious sects. In Washington he frequently attended with Mrs. Rodgers St. John's Episcopal Church; and it is still remembered that, when the sermons were unusually long, to the great annoyance of his good wife he would arise from his seat, yawn, and stretch himself.

From his Scotch ancestry, Rodgers inherited a gravity of mien and a somewhat stern and exacting nature, an aptitude for hard steady toil, temperance in all things, purity of life, love of home, and manly independence. In all his work he was attentive, industrious, clear

sighted, and incorruptible. He could be neither cajoled nor frightened from the path of duty. Respecting his achievements, he was the soul of modesty, seldom mentioning them either in public or private. While he disliked display, he was yet a stickler for the forms and customs of his profession. Willing to give freely his time, his substance, and his life if need be, for his friends, he hated his enemies with a steady persistence. He gave them a fair warning, and struck no foul blows. Far dearer than fame or glory were the delights of his home and fireside. He was most fortunate in his marriage, and drank deep of the cup of domestic happiness. His wife was always to him the queen of women, and he to her the devoted lover. He had the simplicity, candor, and bluntness of the rugged sailor. A hater of sham and artifice, he courted no superior, nursed no delusions, and knew no fear.

A most vivid characterization of the commodore was written some years after his death by one of his contemporaries, the great senator from Missouri, Thomas Hart Benton. It may be fittingly quoted in this connection:

“My idea of the perfect naval commander had been formed from history, and from the study of such characters as the Von Tromps and De Ruyters of Holland, the Blakes of England, and the De Tourvilles of France—men modest and virtuous, frank and sincere, brave and patriotic, gentle in peace, terrible in war; formed for high command by nature; and raising themselves to their proper sphere by their own exertions from low beginnings. When I first saw Commodore Rodgers, which was after I had reached senatorial age and station, he recalled to me the idea of those modern admirals; and subsequent acquaintance confirmed the impression then made. He was to me the complete impersonation of

my idea of the perfect naval commander—person, mind, and manners; with the qualities of command grafted on the groundwork of a good citizen and good father of a family; and all lodged in a frame to bespeak the seaman and officer.

“His very figure and face were those of the naval hero—such as we conceive from naval songs and ballads; and, from the course of life which the sea officer leads—exposed to the double peril of waves and war, contending with the storms of the elements as well as with the storm of battle. We associate the idea of bodily power with such a life; and when we find them united—the heroic qualities in a frame of powerful muscular development—we experience a grateful feeling of completeness, which fulfils a natural expectation and leaves nothing to be desired. And when the same great qualities are found, as they often are, in the man of slight and slender frame, it requires some effort of reason to conquer a feeling of surprise at a combination which is a contrast, and which presents so much power in a frame so little promising it; and hence all poets and orators, all painters and sculptors, all the dealers in imaginary perfections, give a corresponding figure of strength and force to the heroes they create.

“Commodore Rodgers needed no help from the creative imagination to endow him with the form which naval heroism might require. His person was of the middle height, stout, square, solid, compact, well-proportioned; and combined in the perfect degree the idea of strength and endurance with the reality of manly comeliness—the statue of Mars, in the rough state, before the conscious chisel had lent the last polish. His face, stern in outline, was relieved by a gentle and be-

nign expression—grave with the overshadowing of an ample and capacious forehead and eyebrows.”<sup>38</sup>

For five generations the Rodgers family in America has exhibited in an unusual degree a taste and aptitude for military life. Two of the commodore's sons, Rear-admiral John Rodgers and Colonel Robert S. Rodgers; two sons-in-law, General Montgomery C. Meigs and Colonel J. N. Macomb; two grandsons, Major John Rodgers Meigs and Lieutenant Frederick Rodgers; and two nephews, Commander C. R. P. Rodgers and Commander G. W. Rodgers, were officers of either the army or the navy during the Civil War. Major John Rodgers Meigs, chief-engineer of the Army of the Shenandoah, was killed near Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1864. Commander G. W. Rodgers, who was chief of staff of Rear-admiral John A. Dahlgren, was killed on board the “Catskill” in an attack on Fort Sumter, in August, 1863. It was of this gallant officer that Miles O'Reilly wrote:

“Woe's me! George Rodgers lies,  
Wid dimmed and dhreamless eyes,  
He has airly won the prize  
Of the sthriped and starry shroud;  
While some fought shy away,  
He pushed far into the fray,  
As if ayger thus to say,  
'All the lads have not been cowed.'”

The commodore is now represented in the navy by three grandsons and five great-grandsons, and in the army by two grandsons and one great-grandson. His grandsons in the navy are Rear-admiral Frederick Rodgers (retired) and Rear-admiral John A. Rodgers, the sons of Colonel Robert S. and Sarah (Perry) Rodgers; and Commander William L. Rodgers, a son of Rear-

<sup>38</sup> Benton, T. H. *Thirty Years' View* (New York, 1856), vol. ii, 144.

admiral John Rodgers. The grandsons in the army are Colonel Montgomery Meigs Macomb and Major Augustus C. Macomb, the sons of Mrs. J. N. Macomb. Rear-admiral C. R. P. Rodgers was a son of the commodore's brother, Commodore G. W. Rodgers, and Captain Raymond P. Rodgers is a grandson. Mrs. Minerva Denison Rodgers, the wife of the commodore, outlived her husband forty years, dying at Rock Island Illinois, in 1877, at the age of ninety-three years. Two of the commodore's children are still living, Mrs. J. N. Macomb of Washington and Mr. Augustus Frederick Rodgers of San Francisco. Senator William Pinkney Whyte of Maryland was a grand-nephew of Commodore Rodgers. His grandmother was the commodore's sister, Ann Maria, who married Senator William Pinkney, Maryland's famous jurist. One of her sons was Edward Coate Pinkney, the most brilliant southern poet before Edgar Allan Poe. Ex-senator George Gray, a distinguished statesman and judge of Delaware, is a grandson of the commodore's sister Rebecca, who married Andrew Gray.

Before 1861, the naval stage was cleared for a new set of actors, those who in the Civil War were to win the "glory and the stars." Many of the old heroes crossed the bar on their last cruise in the middle years of the first half of the nineteenth century: Perry in 1819; Decatur, 1820; Macdonough, 1825; Tingey, 1829; Bainbridge, 1833; Rodgers, 1838; Chauncey, 1840; and Hull and Porter, 1843. On the death of Rodgers, Commodore James Barron succeeded him as the senior officer of the navy. Previous to Barron's attaining this position, he had been given the command of several shore stations; but after the Chesapeake-Leopard affair in 1807 he never again went

to sea. To the end he was a discredited officer, the tragic figure of the Old Navy. When he died in 1851, Commodore Charles Stewart succeeded him as senior officer; and, when in 1862 the rank of rear-admiral was created, Stewart was promoted to it—the only captain of the War of 1812 to achieve this distinction. He passed away in 1869, the last of the heroes of that war. His death was the occasion of one of Edmund Clarence Stedman's finest poems, entitled "The Old Admiral," one stanza of which may be quoted as a fitting conclusion to this narrative:

"He was the one  
Whom Death had spared alone  
Of all the captains of that lusty age,  
Who sought the foemen where he lay,  
On sea or sheltering bay,  
Nor till the prize was theirs repressed their rage.  
They are gone, — all gone:  
They rest with glory and the undying Powers;  
Only their name and fame and what they saved are ours!"



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